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FIRST TO FIGHT

SPLINTER CELL
CHAOS THEORY

PC GAMES ADDICT

EXCLUSIVE!

WARHAMMER 40,000 DAWN OF WAR

SPACE MARINES AND KILLING MACHINES!

REVIEWED!

DOOM III

Our verdict on what's right and wrong about id's latest offering

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WARHAMMER 40,000

DAWN OF WAR

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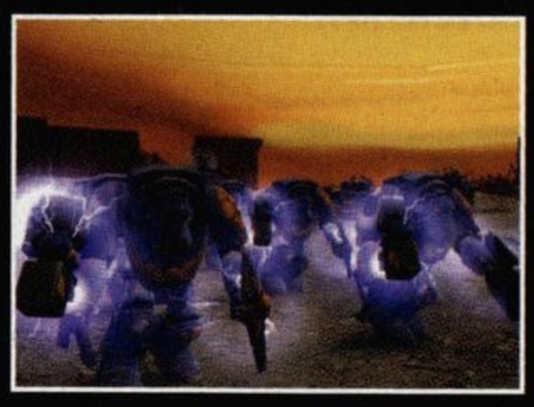

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DERWENT HOWARD

This month, we've been...

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GETTING POLITICAL...
...with a game which pits you against the most powerful man in the world. And pigs!

30

LURKING AROUND...
...with other dubious dudes. Sam Fisher learns to work with others at long last. Good boy!

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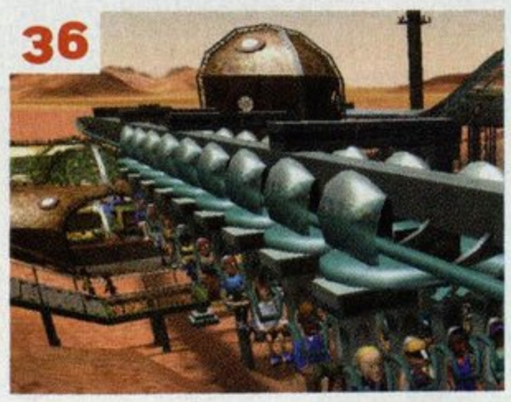
GETTING HAMMERED...
...in *Dawn of War*, as we wade into the battlefields to bring you a front line report on the first Warhammer 40K to truly take the fight to PC gaming.



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MAKING PEOPLE SICK...
...who keep coming back for more. *Rollercoaster Tycoon 3* makes management merry.

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SOURCING SILICON...
...to bring you the first ATI AX800XT review. Plus PCI Express explained and explored.

Be afraid

Some may pretend that they're too mentally agile to be scared or surprised by anything, but I'll happily admit that for the first time in a possibly two years or so, a game has had me reeling in my chair involuntarily, completely unaware what a dork I'd been making of myself. That game is *Doom 3*, and while it's questionable how much this game has done for first-person shooters from a combative point of view, John Carmack and friends have cleverly used technology to produce an atmosphere richer and thicker than arguably any game before it.

In what has been a quiet month for PC releases we have brought you the latest on two of the bigger games still to land this year, *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory* and *Warhammer 40K: Dawn of War*.

'Your' section of the magazine is now in full swing, with numerous ways for you all to interact with the magazine, each one offering a different prize.

Doom 3 this month, *Half-Life 2* around the corner... When it rains it pours, so let the deluge begin

DAN TOOSE
EDITOR

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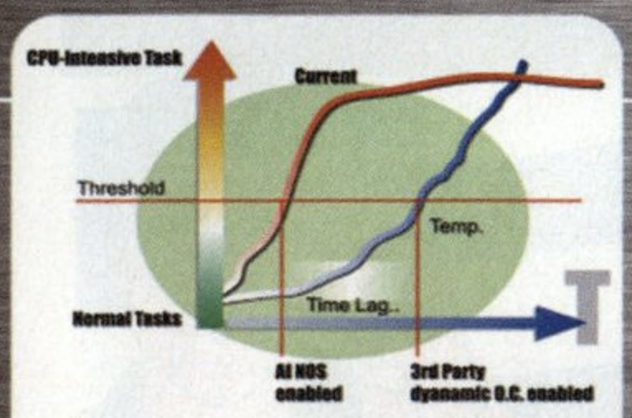

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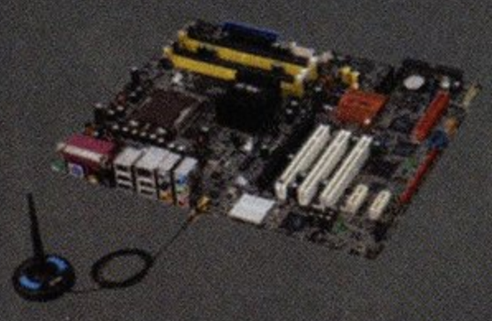

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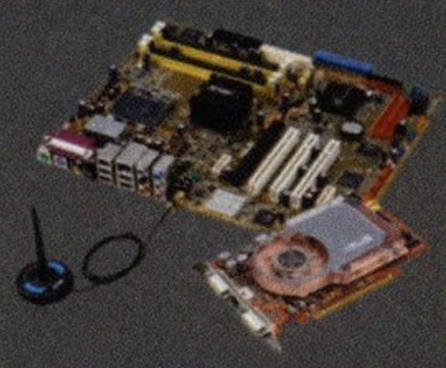

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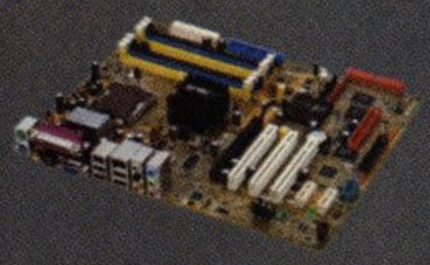

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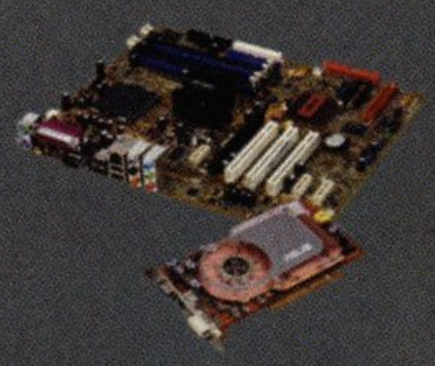

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Issue 25 September 2004

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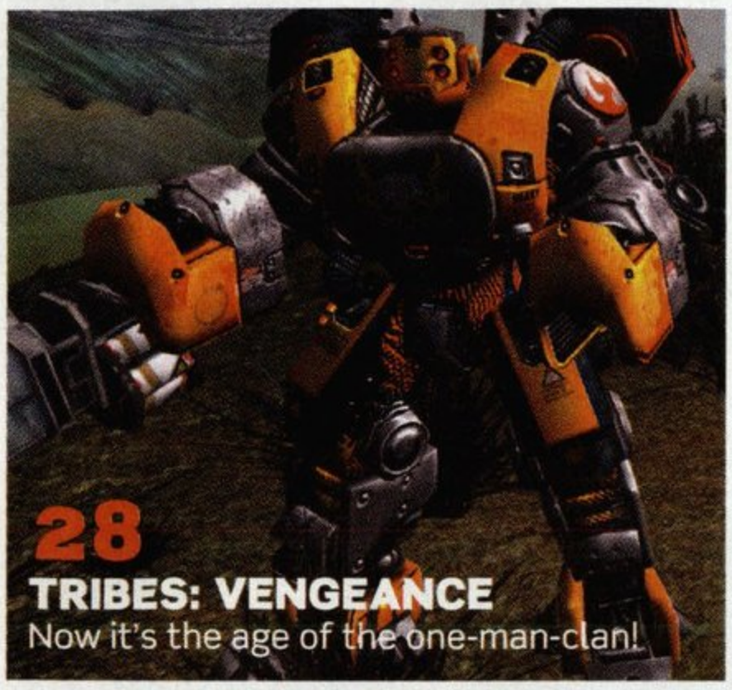

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DOOM III
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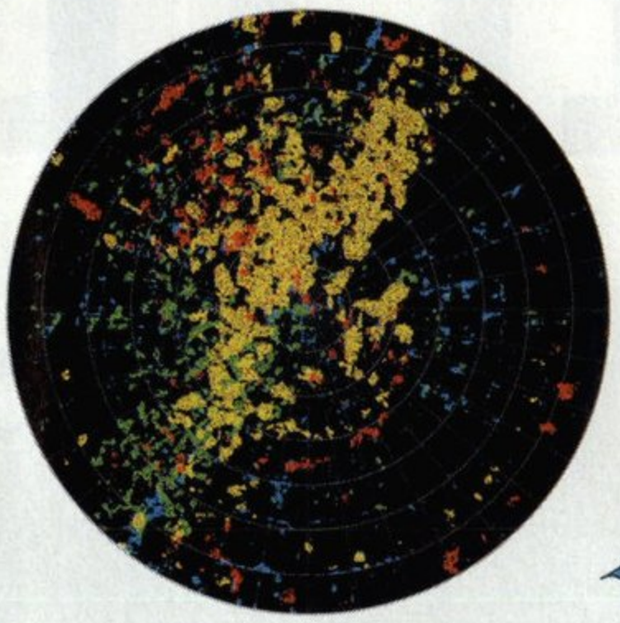
Revelations or red herrings? We'll let you know in thirty days or so. Patience...

ON THE DISC PC GAMES ADDICT is more than just a magazine. Articles sporting this sign are enhanced by extras on the disc.

Not only do you get to work on a multi-million dollar radar system, but we'll pay you $43,000 to do it.



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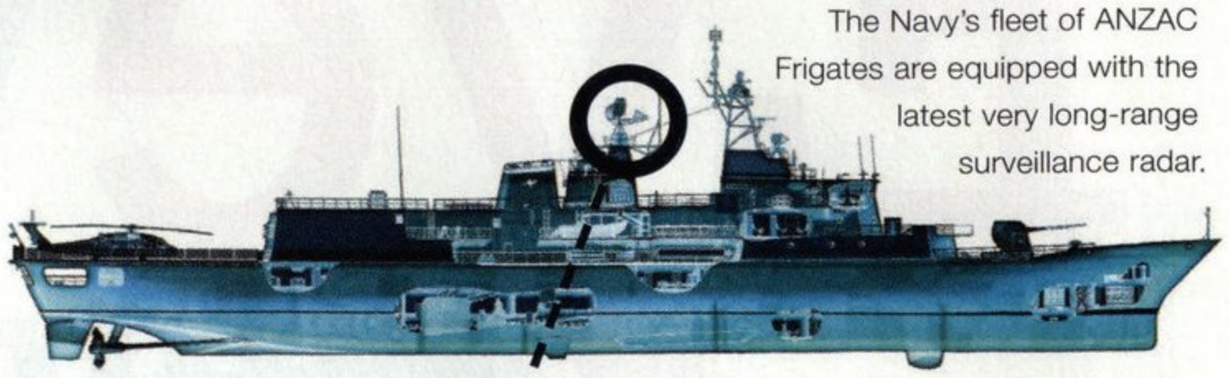

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Eyewitness

YOUR MOST WANTED

Latest info on the games *you* want

1 HALF-LIFE 2 HAXORS CAUGHT

Several arrests have been made in relation to the theft of Valve's *Half-Life 2* source code and game content. In October of last year, hackers released both the source code and playable portions of the game to the internet, after gaining illicit access to Valve's servers.

Valve CEO Gabe Newell released this statement about the arrest: "Within a few days of the announcement of the break-in, the online gaming community had tracked down those involved. It was extraordinary to watch how quickly and how cleverly gamers were able to unravel what are traditionally unsolvable problems for law enforcement related to this kind of cyber-crime."

The arrests were made in several different countries.

Post-E3, Valve have gone into silent running mode as they beaver to finish the game in time for this year. But fresh information is still emerging, courtesy of the **www.halflife2.net** forums. Their collection of obsessive fans regularly email the Valve collective for snippets of information, and collate the responses in a single thread. That thread currently runs to 40 pages, 15 replies to a page.

According to the thread: the E3 footage will be released in Bink format; a post-E3 *HL2* benchmark will be released "soon", so we can all check our systems out before taking the plunge; and the ports of the original content, *Half-Life, Counter Strike*, etc will be "full conversions" – according to Rick Ellis of Valve – and not just a machine-designed automatic update. For the full geek effect, check it out for yourself.

Official ETA September
We say September, like last year...

Half-Life 2, the movie. Hey, now there's an idea...

"Gordon is modelling our Slimey Tentacle scarf, with crowbar accessory...

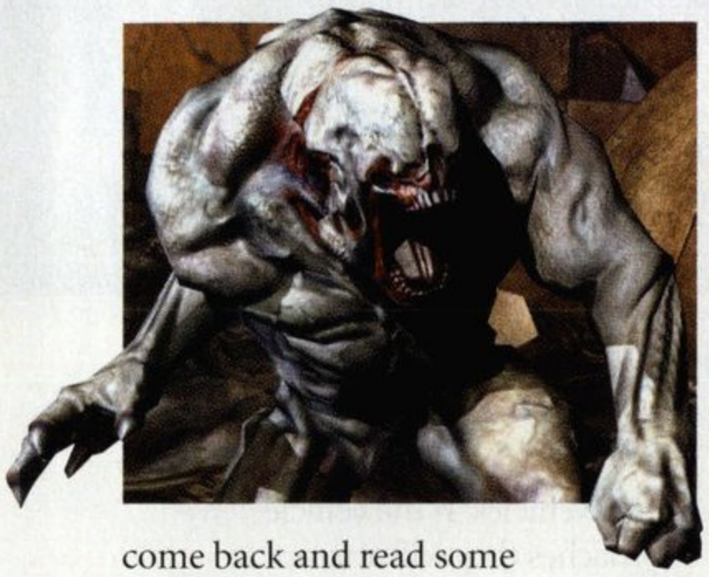
2 ROME: TOTAL WAR MOVIE MAGIC

Another gorgeous *Rome: Total War* movie has hit our discs, and we've got some choice chunks of analysis.

It starts with a montage of troops in different battles, proudly manoeuvring into place, spears raised: it's like watching a marching forest. The siege towers roll into place, cavalry horses shuffle and snort into position. With a wave of a sword, the order is given to attack and all hell breaks loose. The battle footage is stunning: flaming rocks draw smoke trails through the air, crushing fortress walls. The camera follows arrows as they speed through the air to their targets. That's followed by a *huge* cavalry charge across a huge field that'll have you'll pawing screen to get at the gaming goodness. By the time the war elephants arrive, you'll probably need to go have a cold shower. Ross certainly did. You'll find the trailer on our DVD this month. so quit reading and load it up. (Then watch it, then

Stripy trousers or no trousers. Choices were few in the ancient world.

ess

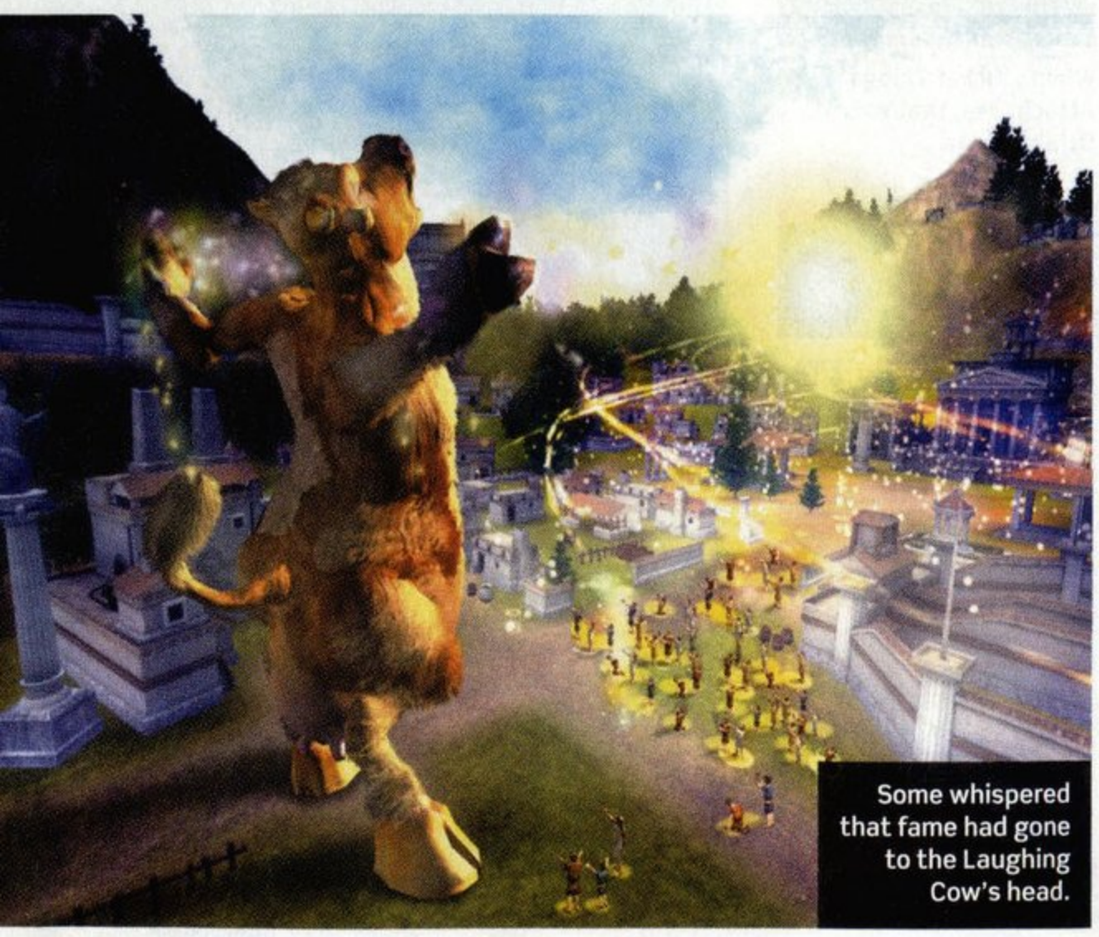


come back and read some more, obviously.)
Official ETA September
We say It's looking likely

3 DOOM III CASTING CALL

Yes, we know it's here, but the movie of the game surfaced this month, with the script completed and the director named.

Music-video director Edna McCallion, will make his feature film debut with a script written by *Doom 3* writer Dave Callaham. The adaptation, although labelled 'Doom', is based on the story of *Doom 3*, so it'll be more of a dark horror tale than an all-out bloodbath. But then, *Doom 3* is a re-telling of the original *Doom*... OK, now we're confused. Of course, all this is subject to change, as we all know Hollywood is flakier than a rushed suntan. In an office round-robin of who we would like to see as the lead, Craig wants The Rock, and James Cottee offered himself.
Official ETA Out Now!
We say The game, not the film



Some whispered that fame had gone to the Laughing Cow's head.

It's just a quick bikini wax, stop blubbing and pull yourself together.

4 BLACK & WHITE VALLEY OF THE ROLLS

The complex physics system at the heart of *Black & White 2* has spawned a new tactic, discovered by the beta-testers. The rocks in-game can be honed and smoothed out. Some of the beta testers have found that they can also be rounded off, making them fully spherical. The rocks then react as any stone ball would, and placing it on top of a valley and letting it go makes it roll back and forth like a skateboarder in a half-pipe. If there happen to be any troops trapped in the way, then they'll be spread over the ground like Marmite. If that mental picture doesn't make you want to play this game, nothing will.
Official ETA Christmas
We say 2005 more like

5 THE SIMS 2 SIMSPEAK?

A part of what has made *the Sims* so popular has to be that special brand of gibberish verbal antics refered to by *the Sims* community as 'Simlish'. The driving thought behind Simlish wasn't just to make us laugh, but to come up with a system of communication that got emotions ▶

Call us cynical, but we suspect the *Doom* movie will be a little lacking when it comes to plot...

WIN A GAME

MY MOST WANTED

Register your excitement!

The Most Wanted chart is voted for by the PCGA readership. Every issue we compile your votes for the upcoming games you're most excited about and then hunt down the very latest news, screenshots and insider information we can uncover. On top of helping us help you, the voter with the best reason for their number #1 choice wins a game!

MY TOP FIVE MOST WANTED GAMES:

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____
5 _____

Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____

In 25 words, what's best about your #1 game?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Send your entries to:
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PO BOX 1037
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Or email pcga@derwenthoward.com.au
Or vote by web pwww.pcga.com.au

YOUR 10 MOST WANTED

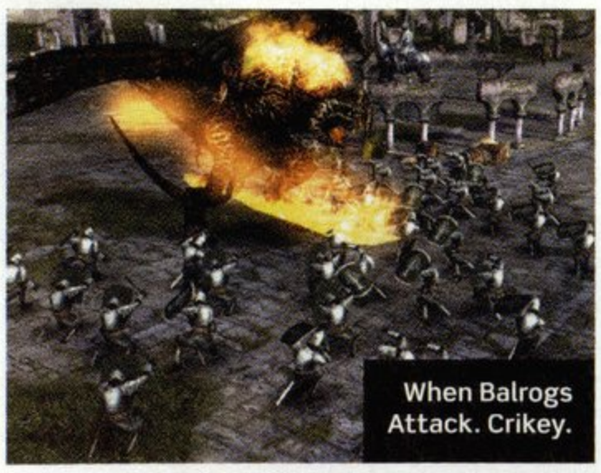
across without verbalising specifics. Two diligent individuals handled all the aural gurning exercises to record all the Simlish for *the Sims*, but because of the nature of the sequel, Maxis have had to call upon more makers of funny phonetics. Another nine voice actors were hired to help record new Simling samples for the countless animations, covering all the ages from baby to elder. Maxis claim they recorded over 42,000 samples in total. That's a lot of grunting and verbal diahorea folks.

Sound like an enjoyable sort of job? Well apparently residents of California thought so to, with over one hundred people showing up to be one of the pioneers of Simlish Mk II.

Official ETA September
We say On course

6 BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH THE PJS

Capturing the spirit of a movie in a game is always a difficult task. But watching the new *Battle for Middle-Earth* trailer, you realise they've managed to grab everything that made Peter Jackson's trilogy so successful.


When Balrogs Attack. Crikey.

Middle-Earth looks glorious. Fires burn, mounted Nazgul turn in the air, flags snap in the wind. The movie briefly shows off the playing area, and then narrator Mark Skaggs, Vice President Executive Producer, unleashes his army.

The moment he gets in-game, the serenity is *crushed*. Mumakil rip up trees with easy flicks of the trunk, trolls march ahead of them, and ahead of the trolls the orcs. The noise filling the air is astonishing.

The video demonstrates the icon-less interface. It's context sensitive, and the icons only arise when the mouse is clicked. The video also demonstrates the level of realism: camps have background action, the winning side cheers, individual units show fear when confronted by something big. How big? Wait until you see the Balrog.

Official ETA November
We say December. Like the movies.

7 STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT DEAR DIARY

Our double whammy of LucasArts coverage begins with the MMO *Battlefield*-alike. The team are currently ironing out the single-player mode, to ensure it mirrors the multiplayer AI. It makes for an interesting design challenge, as Lead Programmer John Northan wrote in a recent developer diary: "Sniper soldiers tend to avoid direct combat. They prefer to look for strategic snipe positions, from which they can pick off enemy soldiers with a precise, long-range rifle. If their snipe position is discovered, they will pull out a pistol and make a fighting retreat." Assault soldiers will seek out enemy vehicles. If the vehicle approaches they will attempt to outflank it, heading to the rear of the vehicle, where it is most vulnerable. Sounds very promising so far.

When... Other Things Attack. Yes, that's right. Other Things.

Official ETA September
We say It'll slip like a Tauntaun on Hoth

Oh, for heaven's sake get a virtual room.

Practising on a broom with a paper-plate face...

8 REPUBLIC COMMANDO UP AGAINST IT

This Star Wars squad shooter is really taking shape. The multiplayer sounds interesting, with 16 players, up to four to a squad, allowed. That makes a huge tactical difference, allowing up four teams

YOUR MOST WANTED CHART

The people have spoken...

A late, and huge, burst saw *Half-Life 2* take the lead again this month. *Rome: TW* put up a good fight, but it's resolve eventually crumbled like its empire. We were pleased to see *B&W2* so high in your estimations, and by the surprise invasion of the charts by *Starship Troopers* and *Operation Flashpoint 2*. Just in time for new shots of the former, and the first of the latter.

POSITION	GAME WANTED	VOTE SHARE	ETA
1 (1)	*Half-Life 2*	40%	September
2 (3)	*Rome: Total War*	15%	September
3 (2)	*Doom 3*	11%	Out Now
4 NEW	*Black & White 2*	10%	Christmas
5 (5)	*The Sims 2*	9%	September
6 NEW	*Star Wars: Battlefront*	4%	September
7 NEW	*Star Wars: Republic Commando*	4%	2005
8 (10)	*LotR: The Battle For Middle Earth*	4%	November
9 NEW	*Operation Flashpoint 2*	2%	2005
10 NEW	*Starship Troopers*	1%	2005
NEAR MISS	*World of Warcraft*	1%	Spring

Axe of Implausible Hugeness +1.

Mace of Pretty, Trippy Light Effect +2.

Lightning Bolt of... Lightning. Lightning +3.

ONE TO WATCH

FABLE

■ **Publisher** Microsoft ■ **Developer** Big Blue Box

It'll be a long time before we see this on PC, but there's no doubt in our minds that it will make it. A forward-thinking RPG with real consequences based on your actions, your hero shaping not only the world around him, but his own body. Your skin tans, your muscles swell as you attempt to create a living legend. Conan the Barbarian fans: this could be your chance to get Thews of Steel at last.

fighting each other online, shifting from the usual two team multiplayer. Very promising. As is the singleplayer gameplay we've seen so far.

A *Halo*-esque dynamic burns through *Republic Commando*. The pace is slow, squads are controlled with intuitive, context sensitive commands, tension builds, and then you're lashed by explosions of tightly controlled, *Unreal* engine violence.

Official ETA 2005

We say We knew Spring was too good to be true.

Sam Fisher really started something with that three-eyed look. *Star Wars Republic Commando.*

9 OPERATION FLASHPOINT 2 ENGINE 'ERE

Bohemia Interactive, makers of the original *Operation Flashpoint* and its sequel, have given us a glimpse of their latest engine in action.

The VBS1 engine is being sold as an army training simulator, but it also drops heavy hints about the next *Flashpoint* game. The sim has a modern day setting, boasts excellent lighting effects, and perfectly rounded character models (as opposed to *Flashpoint*'s mannequins). The package, on sale for US$150, includes 9 missions with a number of special forces add-ons available. Currently it's used by the US Marine Corps. If you fancy buying it, think again. It's only sold to 'federal, state, and local government agencies for military, law enforcement, homeland defence, and first responder training.'

A well-rounded fellow.

Official ETA Doesn't even have one

We say This time next year

10 STARSHIP TROOPERS NEW SHOTS

Your final Most Wanted game this month is *Starship Troopers*. It's not scheduled until this time next year, but we've got our hands on some lovely new screenshots. The most exciting is the Ant Lion running a poor marine through with its nasty serrated leg. Don't say we don't give you what you want.

Official ETA 2005

We say This time next year

Ant-Lion ventriloquists.

Eyewitness News

27.6% of all counter-terrorists camp the bomb site. True.

Gordon says "Stay in school and you too can learn about resonance cascades. And pie charts."

BEST-EST!

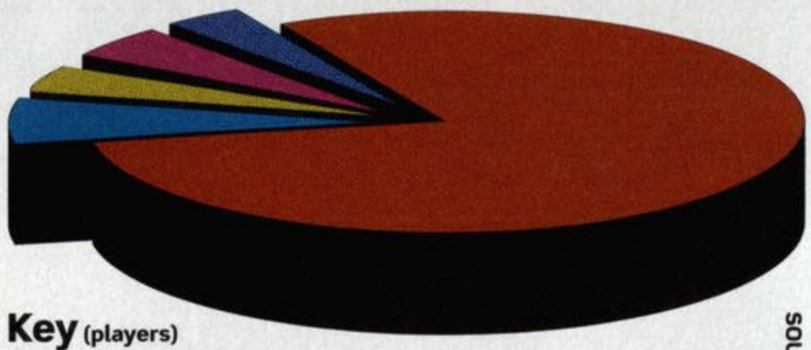
Numbers game

Online gaming scores settled

Almost ten times more people play *Half-Life* online than its nearest rival, according to the Gamespy stats page. This record of online gaming habits shows that the five year old *Half-Life* (mostly *Counter-Strike*) still dominates the scene with roughly 70,000 players per day. Freeware *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory* placed second with an average of 6,000, and *Call of Duty, America's Army: Operations, BF1942* and, surprisingly, *Neverwinter Nights*, regularly traded places to complete the top five. The top ten provided more thrills than Eurovision, as *Quake III* out performed both *Battlefield: Vietnam* and *Unreal Tournament 2004*.

The top ten features only three games released in the last year and no single game carves out a significant piece of the market, apart from *Half-Life*. Disturbing news for major publishers investing in new games. Still, these figures only include Gamespy users and represent a very Western snapshot of online gaming. Korean MMOG *Lineage* would blow them all away with a staggering four million users. Yes, four *million*!

The stats



Key (players)	
Half-Life	70,000
Enemy Territory	6000
Call Of Duty	4100
America's Army 2.0	4600
Neverwinter Nights	3000

SOURCE: Game Spy

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Umagawa 22003 — 3d Boxing 22012

Compatible only with Nokia 3510i, 3560, 3100, 3200, 3300, 5100, 7100, 7600, 6230, 6220, 6100, 6800, 6610, 6200, 7250, 7250i, 7210, 6820, 6650, 7650, 3650, N-Gage, 3660, 6600, 7610, 3660; Motorola V500/525/600/T720; Siemens S55/ M55/ MC60; Sony Ericsson T610 / 630 / Z600.

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Compatible only with Except Where Indicated: Nokia 3510i, 3560, 3100, 3200, 3300, 5100, 7100, 7600, 6230, 6220, 6100, 6800, 6610, 6200, 7250, 7250i, 7210, 6820, 6650, 7650, 3650, N-Gage; 3660, 6600, 7610, 3660; Motorola V500, 525, 600, T720; Siemens S55, M55, MC60; Sony Ericsson T610, 630, Z600; Sharp GX10/20/30.

Minefield 22001 (Not Nokia 3510i, 3560, 7650, 3660, N-Gage, 3660, 6600, 7610, 3660; Motorola, Sony Ericsson, Sharp)

Mix Master 22002 (Not Motorola, Sony Ericsson)

Volleyball 22010 (Not Nokia 3510i, 3560; Motorola, Sharp)

Moter Duel 22011 (Not Motorola T720; Siemens, Sharp)

Superoo 22015 (Not Motorola V500/525/600; Sony Ericsson, Sharp)

Croc Island 22017 (Not Motorola V500/525/600; Siemens, Sony Ericsson)

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Ski Challenge 22018 (Not Motorola V500, 525, 600, Siemens/Sharp)

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Slots 22020 (Not Nokia 3510i, 3560; Motorola V500/525/600; Siemens, Sony Ericsson)

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TITLE	ARTIST	MONO	POLY
99 Red Balloons	Nena	11206	33428
Toxic	Britney Spears	11463	33685
Sandstorm	Darude	11207	33429
1life	Xandee	11424	33646
21 Questions	50 Cent	11144	33366
A Little Less...	Jxl feat. Elvis	11208	33430
A Team	Post	11379	33601
A Whole New World	Menken	11380	33602
Aerodynamic	Daft Punk	11210	33432
All I have	Jennifer Lopez	11145	33367
All in my head	Kosheen	11163	33385
All of my love	Led Zeppelin	11340	33562
All That She Wants	Ace Of Base	11211	33433
All The People...	Safri Duo	11477	33699
Illusion	Benassi Bros	11468	33690
Alone	Lasgo	11213	33435
TITLE	ARTIST	MONO	POLY
Amadeus	Falko	11214	33436
Ameno	Era	11215	33437
American life	Madonna	11164	33386
American Woman	Lenny Kravitz	11341	33563
Another brick....	Pink Floyd	11121	33343
Another Chance	Roger Sanchez	11216	33438
Atomic	Blondie	11342	33564
Baby boy	Beyonce	11165	33387
Baby I love you	JenniferLopez	11166	33388
Be with you	Atomic Kitten	11218	33440
Beautiful	Xtina	11219	33441
Beautiful occupation	Travis	11484	33706

COMMENT

Movie-licensed dross under fire

Games publishers are to be penalised for churning out substandard movie licence games – at least if media giants Warner Brothers get their way.

Jason Hall, Vice President of Warner's gaming subsidiary, has issued a stark warning to complacent publishers. "The game industry has had its time to exploit movie studios and to get away with producing inferior products," said Hall. "But, with Warner Brothers, no more. Those days are over."

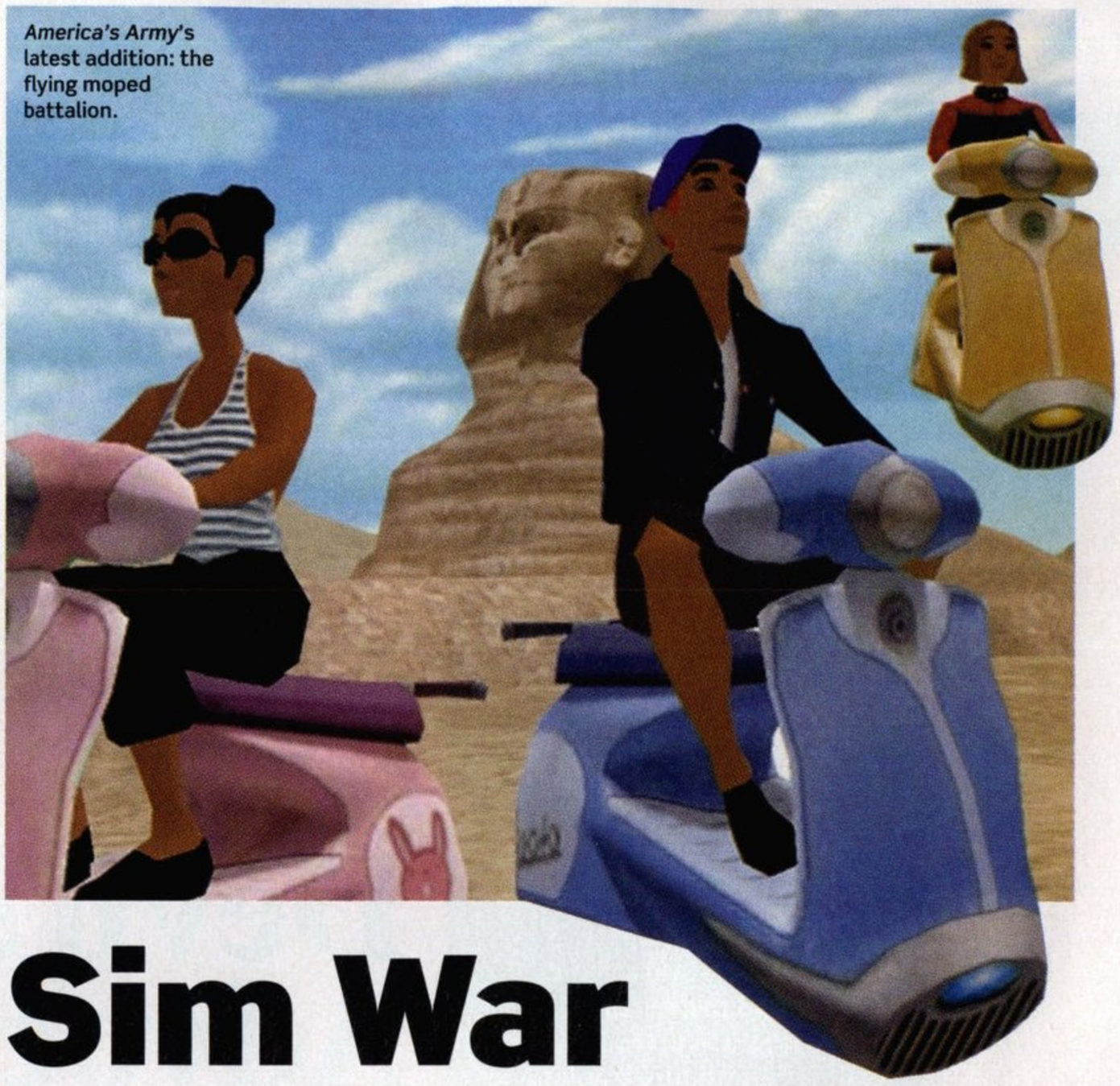
Drawing on years of games industry experience as CEO of Monolith Studios (*No One Lives Forever* and *Aliens vs Predator*), Hall clearly stated his intention in an ign.com interview: "I plan on curbing as much of that lowest common denominator crap as possible."

Valuable movie brands are being damaged by association with poor game equivalents

Hall believes that valuable movie brands are being damaged by association with poor gaming equivalents. His proposal is to grade the quality of game tie-ins using a system of average review scores. Game publishers must rack up a mean score of 70% across the board or face being penalised by an increase in royalty payments. "If the publisher delivers what they promised, then it's not even an issue," says Hall.

Predictably, the game publishers beg to differ. Atari released *Enter the Matrix* to lukewarm reviews last year. "We sold four million copies. That's $250,000 worldwide" said Bruno Bonnell, Atari's CEO. "And Warner Brothers would penalise us because we didn't get 70%? Are they joking?"

If and when Hall's system will be adopted isn't clear, but the concern is that developers will respond with obstructive tactics rather than innovation. Restricting media access to preview and review code or even suing publications for negative reviews would be possible responses. But Warner Bros stand indicates that publishers will have to start delivering the goods, and not just the sales.



America's Army's latest addition: the flying moped battalion.

Sim War

There MMO hit by collateral damage

The American Army is building a MMO copy of Earth using the *There* engine, all but killing off the peace-loving chat game.

The *Massively Multiplayer Simulation for Asymmetric Warfare* will be used by the military as a persistent MMO for training exercises.

The US army chose *There* because they wanted a sim that emphasised "human interaction" over typical warfare. Their version will be full of soldiers patrolling war zones with chat bubbles over their heads. Soldiers will play themselves, plan patrols and chat with civilians on a copy of Earth, although only Kuwait City is fully modelled at the moment. Time to leave, then.

Developers There Inc. followed the US army's order with an announcement stating they'll be focusing on 'licensed' products, and reducing support for *There*. That signals the beginning of the end for the peaceful party game, the first and dearest casualty in a battle it couldn't win against the might of the US military.

gobbets

Question Time› The 20Q pocket device squeezes a neural network computer with "a quarter of a million synaptic connections" into a compact device that can challenge you to a bout of 20 questions. Manufactured by Radica the device is no slouch when it comes to animals, minerals and vegetables. More details at www.20q.net

Devil's Advocate

Sex and videogames don't mix, you say? We beg to differ.

MICHELLE STARR
We debated over who should handle the Devil's Advocate piece on 'Sex and video games' and decided that rather than have a guy who looks like he needs to defend the point, we'd let the fairer gender make this call, cue Michelle Starr.

Discuss this article at
http://forums.derwenthoward.com.au/viewforum.php?f=5

Ah, sex. One of the most controversial topics in relation to gaming (second only to violence). Whether it be a heroine's moue or unbridled antics, there's always someone who's going to be sure to find the whole thing unbearably offensive.

But sex sells. It makes sense; when all's said and done, we follow our biological instincts before any other. And a friend of mine once said it best: the male body is function. The female body is art. I'm inclined to agree – it's a much more aesthetic experience to feast your eyes on curvy bits than the rugged form of some stealth soldier.

Throw a girl into a game, though, and the reactions are mixed at best. Not from the male gaming community – nobody's going to complain about a tiny arse in tight leather pants, and if guys don't like it, there are plenty of alternatives. Among girls, though, it's a different story.

On the one hand, there are very few decent games out there that cater to the female gamer. If a game comes out with a female protagonist, lots of us will immediately pounce, glad for an opportunity to relax into a character that is more completely us. On the other hand, a lot of those characters are so totally unrealistic, and so obviously targeted at the male demographic, as to be an utter insult.

The other irritating thing is in knowing that we are the real women. Gaming lads will drool over Lara, or fantasise about Nova after the lights go out, or daydream about what it would be like to get inside Samus' suit. But no real woman will ever be naturally proportioned like Lara Croft , or have Nova 12's perfect symmetry, or be able to contort herself like Samus Aran.

It's easy to justify an obsession with a pixilated petticoat by saying that reality is a subjective thing, or to hold up examples from the media and claim that nothing we see is real. It's easy to cite plastic surgery and cosmetics and push-up bras as a reason why it's okay to lust after Cate Archer and Nina Williams .

As far as I'm concerned, you can argue till you're blue in the face, but you're forgetting one important thing: everyone else.

The truth is, unreality is in the minority. We might have perfection thrown in our faces every time we pick up a magazine, turn on the TV or look at a billboard, but these things aren't a solution – they're part of the problem. I could go into a diatribe about body image and feeling like we're never going to be able to compare, but you all know what I'm thinking, so let's just pretend I've said it and move on.

Now, I accept that men are visual creatures, and I don't see any harm in having a nice little fantasy in your own time. It's the unrealistic expectations that can arise in regards to real women.

Videogame chicks are the ultimate dream: you have them under your complete control, you can turn them off and on with a flick of a switch, and you never have to deal with PMT. It's okay to dream. Just remember that there's no real person out there that's going to be that way. And remember this: it may be a bit more work, but having a real person to love and hate is more rewarding than any kind of videogame crush, ever.

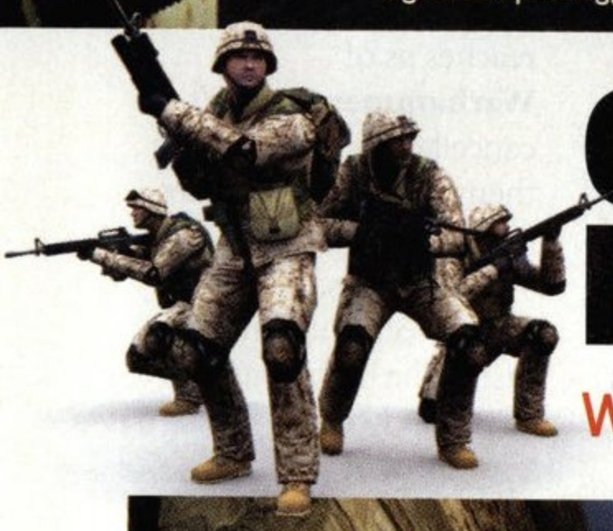
The End.

Next month: Barely Legal Teens? Or will we break from the sex/female trend?

CLOSE COMBAT WILL FLASHBANG YOUR WORLD BECAUSE...
› Fear is your ultimate weapon › You can call in mortar stonks and Cobra gunships
› The US Marine Corps plan to use it as a training tool › You can 'butt-stroke' enemies to death

Scoop!

In contrast to *Full Spectrum Warrior*, *Close Combat* enables players to peer down sights and pull triggers.



CLOSE COMBAT FIRST TO FIGHT

When Bush comes to shove he sends for the Marines

Let the morale of your team slide and they will start dilly-dallying and questioning orders.

Until army boffins invent a full-body flak jacket with reinforced crotch and integral diaper, we here at PCGA will be getting our contemporary combat thrills exclusively from games like upcoming tactical shooter *Close Combat: First to Fight.*

Based on authentic Marines team tactics, and incorporating some of the psychological and morale modelling that made the *Close Combat* WWII RTSs so compelling, this gritty portrayal of urban warfare puts you in control of a four-man fire team in the dusty streets of a modern, Middle-Eastern city ("definitely not Baghdad" – Destineer spokesman).

We came away from a recent visit to Take Two HQ mightily impressed by the AI – specifically the way your comrades automatically exploit cover, seek multiple angles of fire during firefights, and advance using bounding overwatch – but also slightly concerned that the strikingly similar *Full Spectrum Warrior* may end up stealing much of *CC:FTF*'s thunder.

TIM STONE

ON THE DISC More screenshots for your visual pleasure > Galleries

README
Publisher Take Two
Developer Destineer
ETA Spring

Eyewitness Undercover

Illustrations by **David Lyttleton**

PSSST! It's...

The Spy

"Red Rover to base. The dog has made a mess on the carpet. Repeat (it did), the dog has made a mess on the carpet."

Wish to contact The Spy? You cannot. The Spy contacts you.

A thousand years from now, when California is nothing but desert and lizards, The Spy's progeny will still be hunting down gaming scoops, Time Team style. And, just as the tomb of Tutankhamen broke open to reveal glories of the past, so will the dusted-over doors of Interplay crack open to reveal the lost gaming glories of our time.

Thanks Interplay's troubles, the chances are we'll never see the likes of the recently announced **Kingpin** sequel and, most famously, **Fallout 3**. The current state of the company is fluctuating wildly. The State of California recently shut the company down and fined them for not paying employees. At the time of writing, they have re-opened, but the current financial state and scale of problems facing the company doesn't fill The Spy with hope.

There were also scary rumours surrounding Ion Storm, makers of **Thief: Deadly Shadows**. For a while it seems like the company had imploded, with rumours of lay-offs and Warren Spector leaving. According to Eidos, Spector is staying on and the job cuts were part of normal working practice after the company released its two major games. The Spy suspects the truth lies in the murky soup of corporate politics.

The Spy has also heard intriguing news from console-land. In the Xbox edition of **Full Spectrum Warrior**, the full US Army version is available to unlock. It's a true completist's version of the game, with malleable squad options and a far more freeform nature. The Spy hopes it makes it into the PC version.

Word also reaches The Spy that two more *Matrix* games are currently in development, aside from MMO **The Matrix Online**. Atari's wonderfully blabby CEO Bruno Bonnell confirmed this piece of news, probably planning to get as much mileage out of the **Enter The Matrix** engine as possible.

Contacts have also revealed that **Morrowind** makers Bethesda are up to their necks in a new RPG project. As yet The Spy can't decipher the coded messages to reveal if this a new **Elder Scrolls** chapter or not.

The Spy's secret camera once again reaped rewards while at EA's offices recently. An image on a monitor appeared to show **Command & Conquer 3**; subsequently, EA have not denied the existence of the project. We may hear more once **Battle for Middle Earth** is done.

Meanwhile, sad news reaches us of **Warhammer Online's** cancellation. Between them, developers Climax and funders Games Workshop decided that the project would not justify the high costs.

Finally, word reaches The Spy that this year's upcoming Quakecon will once again *not* feature **Quake 4**. The game's still not ready for public consumption, so id are saving it for a later date. That honestly makes us wonder though, because what we saw of **Doom 3** at Quakecon '03 was quite frankly jerky and unimpressive. If that was okay to show, does this suggest **Quake 4** must still looks a shambles? The Spy will know all. Out!

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ANIMATED VIOLENCE,
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Lego Star Wars

A while back In a toy-box, not too far away...

After creating *Star Wars* racing games, RPGs, combat 'flight sims', first-person shooters, strategy games and pretty much every other type of title imaginable, have LucasArts explored all their gaming avenues? A brand-new treat coming from Giant Interactive, Traveller's Tales and Lucasarts proves the answer is no, namely, *Lego Star Wars.*

Basically, *LSW* will retell the stories of Episodes One, Two and Three, and the whole thing will be done entirely in Lego. While this will undoubtedly be considered a travesty by some, the specs we've seen so far make it look pretty worth while.

For starters, *Lego Star Wars* will feature a co-op play mechanic, referred to as "drop in/drop out" gameplay. The two players can choose characters on the fly in order to take advantage of the different abilities they possess.

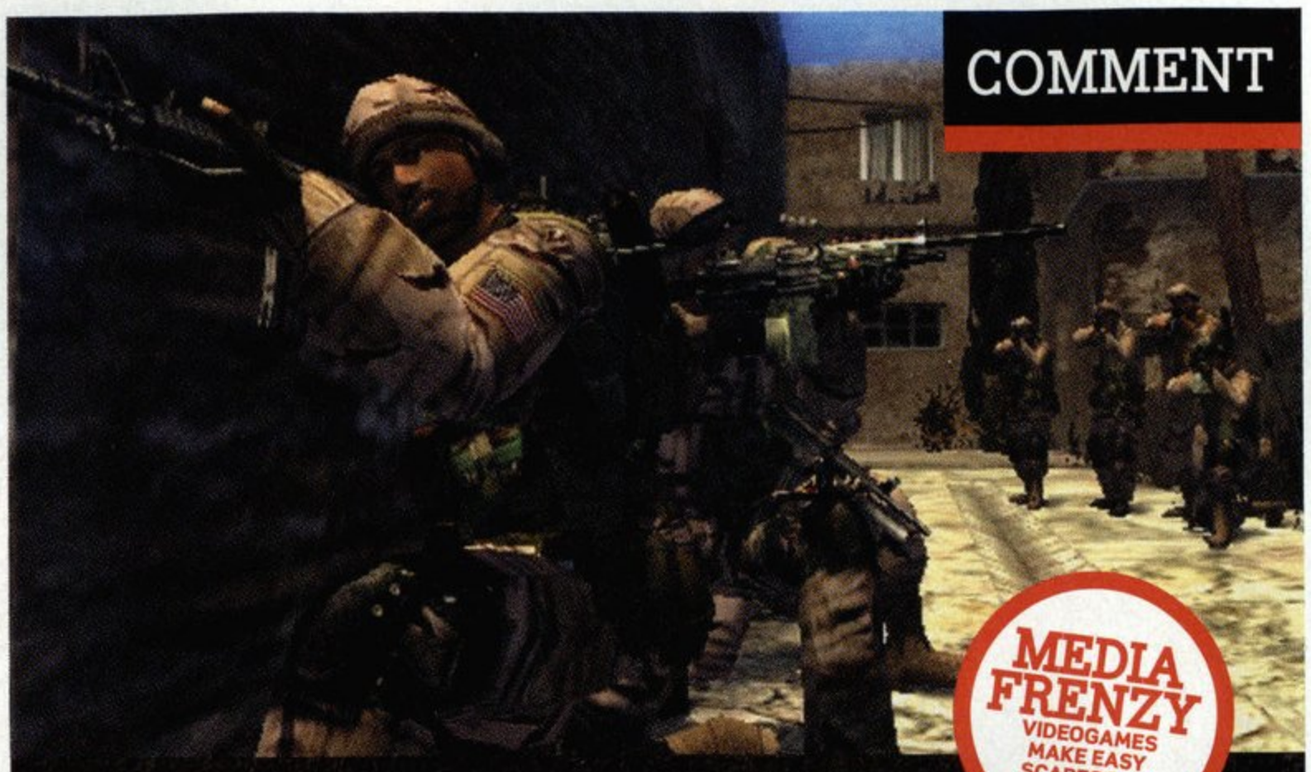
A large part of the gameplay will involve building stuff out of the blocks that make up everything within the game. You'll be able to do pretty much everything, from making object to reshaping your environment to make it more accessible.

A *Star Wars* game wouldn't be complete without Lightsaber duels, and there will be plenty of that. Since you'll be playing little Lego guys, sabre comabt might not be as complex and elegant as other games have made it, but watching Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan fight on stumpy little Lego legs might be worth a giggle or two.

The Jedi won't be the only playable characters, and there will be missions that involve more than just waving around a Lightsaber, but it's early days yet, and Lucasarts seem reluctant to release much information so far.

We don't know who thought of combining *Star Wars*, Lego and videogames, but it looks as if the three will blend together harmoniously. We'll know for certain some time in 2005.

MICHELLE STARR



COMMENT

Videogames blamed

MEDIA FRENZY
VIDEOGAMES MAKE EASY SCAPEGOAT, YET AGAIN

"What we saw in the Abu Ghraib prison scandal was the tip of the iceberg – it was a glimpse of a generation of war gamers coming of age." So says Gulf War veteran Mary Spio, quoted in American newspaper USA Today. Spio thinks videogames provoke bloodlust and the story implies a link between her allegations and the abuse of Iraqis by US military personnel. Then it quotes another Spio gem: "Videogames that enable players to kill real human beings are desensitising generations of American society." Don't know about you but I've yet to play a game that offers me the chance to kill a real human being. Much less a journalist desperate for a story.

The article then quotes Douglas Gentile, an assistant professor of psychology at Iowa State University, as saying:

"It's more likely to be a vicious circle, where increased interest in war leads to playing these games, which leads to more aggressive feelings and increased negative stereotypes of other cultures."

The occasion was the Xbox release of *Full Spectrum Warrior*. A PC-bound RTS that features squads of US troops battling through scenarios of a Middle Eastern persuasion. Videogaming is a soft target for the mainstream media because it is a medium little understood by large sections of their audience. These irresponsible stories aim to scare parents into believing their children are being trained as killers by their own 'toys'. And they also deflect attention from the real issues.

Can the influence of videogames really be measured against the daily images of Western military machines wreaking destruction in foreign lands? Or, more importantly, the influence of our own politicians and policymakers who believe it is their right to run other countries and to constantly shift their reasons for doing so? I would maintain that it is the attitudes and deceits of our political culture that is far more likely to give rise to negative stereotypes than our videogame culture. If only the mainstream media would focus on the real culprits.

MARK DONALD

GfK THE PC TOP 10 CHART

Atari playing their cards right this month...

Okay, we're happy to admit when we're wrong about something, and we have to confess that the unbridled success of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* surprised the hell out of us. We wouldn't have guessed many PC gamers were also into a particularly Japanese flavoured trading card game. One question that we have to ask now is "Who bought these games, parents or the gamers?"

Is it the gamers or the parents that are making *Yu-Gi-Oh!* a success?

POSITION	GAME	PUBLISHER
1 **NEW**	*Yu-Gi-Oh! Power of Chaos*	Atari
2 (1)	*The Sims: Deluxe*	EA
3 (6)	*The Sims: Unleashed*	EA
4 (7)	*The Sims: Superstar*	EA
5 **NEW**	*Monopoly 2003*	Ubisoft
6 RE	*The Sims: Vacation*	EA
7 RE	*The Sims: Makin' Magic*	EA
8 RE	*The Sims: Hot Date*	EA
9 (10)	*Counter-Strike: Condition Zero*	Vivendi
10 RE	*Rise of Nations*	Microsoft

CHARLIE'S PANZERS

93%

92%

89%

92%

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THIS IS HARDCORE

Journey to the centre of the genres

Eliot 'Goblin King ' Fish

THIS IS...

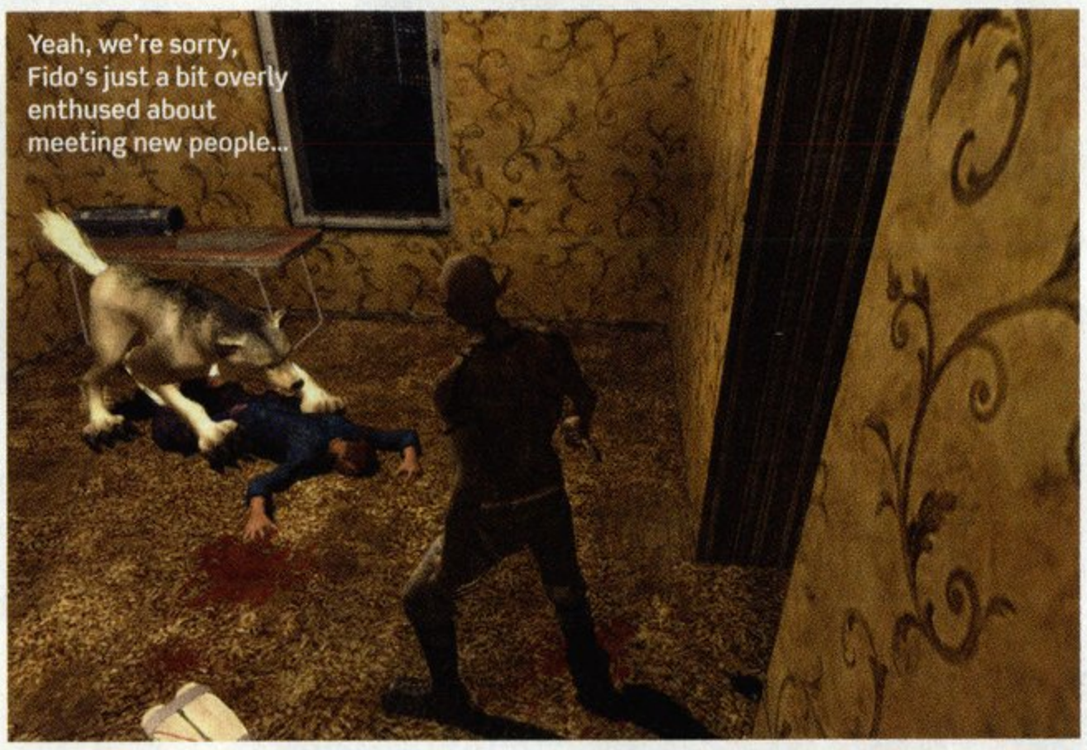
RPG/ADVENTURE

The news that the beleaguered *Fallout 3* has been resurrected from the undead corpse that is Interplay and licensed to *Morrowind* developer, Bethesda Softworks, must be music to most gamers' ears, because it's a bard's tale to ours. Bethesda have at least a decade in RPG development experience, and were responsible for some gems - *Daggerfall* being the most memorable. Taking on the intimidating job of doing justice to the *Fallout* license is obviously something they don't take lightly. "We are overjoyed," said executive producer Todd Howard. "Fallout is one of my favorite games, and we plan to develop a visually stunning and original game for *Fallout 3* with all the hallmarks of a great RPG: player choice, engaging story, and non-linearity."

If you didn't squint, you might have missed the fine print that came with this announcement, stating that *Fallout 3* will be developed concurrently with the next game in the *Elder Scrolls* series, making it number four.

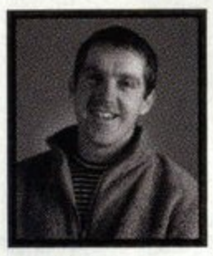
Fangs a lot

Expect to be reading a lot about *NeverWinter Nights 2* and *Baldur's Gate 3* in the next few months, as more and more juicy details get released on these two massive sequels. With these blockbusters on the horizon, it would be easy for a game such as Troika's *Vampire the Masquerade: Bloodlines* to slip under the radar. Troika have been happily tweaking the game to perfection as the weeks tick by, as they can't release it until Valve get *Half-Life 2* on shelves, such is their licensing deal with the Source engine.



Yeah, we're sorry, Fido's just a bit overly enthused about meeting new people...

Cross Swords with Eliot at
eliotf@derwenthoward.com.au



Tim 'Tailspin' Stone

THIS IS...

SIMULATION

Very few massively multiplayer online games can boast an unbroken lineage going back as far as *WarBirds*. Born nine years ago under the name *Confirmed Kill*, it's recently undergone a major refit, emerging with more believable ballistics, cosier cockpits, and a number of new rides. Should you fancy a flit in any of the 56 types of World War II-vintage machines now available then the code – all 285Mb of it – is available for free at **www.totalsims.com** along with an offer of two weeks of complimentary play (no credit card required). That fortnight can also be used to try Total's tank sim *Armoured Assault* and its WWI wingding *Dawn of Aces*.

Cold steel courtesy of Target Korea.

Fokker try plane

If the sight of pirouetting Pups and flaming Fokkers floats your flying boat then be aware that *Dawn of Aces* will soon face stiff competition in the shape of the provocatively-titled *Richthofen's Skies*. Like the other sims built from the versatile Targetware engine (**www.targetware.net**) this one will be totally free until all canvas wrinkles have been ironed out.

Before I sign off, if you've got a penchant for Pacific theatre combat planes of WWII, check out the development updates for *IL-2 Forgotten Battles* at **www.il2sturmovik.com** to check out the new Japanese aircraft such as the Aichi D3A1 or the Kawasaki Ki-43. Banzai!.

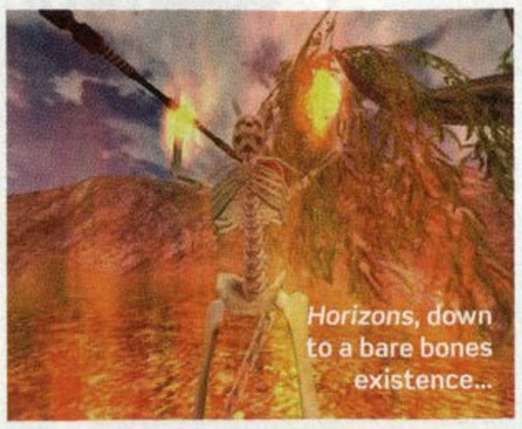
Aerated? Contact Tim at
pcgamer@futurenet.co.uk

THIS IS...

ONLINE

Jere 'Charge it!' Lawrence

You've just spent squillions developing a MMORPG except with one small, minor problem. It didn't cut the mustard and not enough people want to play it. What do you do? Well, Artifact have a billing system in place that will snag anyone who doesn't read the fine print. The ruse is rather simple - Offer a 7-day free trial like other online games do, then hide the make-or-break detail away in a lengthy set of terms and conditions. The *only* way to cancel the account is to ring Artifact's helpdesk, during US business hours. If you don't make this call before your short trial is over, they bill you. We Aussies cop it the worst, having to make an international call at some ungodly hour of the morning just to tell them to stop charging us. Is it any surprise then that they've gone through a voluntary business restructure that includes a huge downsizing of their servers?



Horizons, down to a bare bones existence...

Bad Dreams

Lyra Studios (**www.lyrastudios.com**) are developing *Reclamation*, a sequel to their first MMORPG, *Underlight*. The game takes place in the world of nightmares and will feature PvP, guilds, a heavy focus on role playing and as an alternative to the level grind, players and GMs will be able to make quests and events. Novel idea, but a question to Lyra: Player driven scripts are only as good as the players involved… Read any decent online game fan fiction recently?

Want to chat? Contact Jere at
jerel@derwenthoward.com.au

Mark 'Butcher' Donald

THIS IS...

STRATEGY/MANAGEMENT

PC Wargamer's have always been drawn to the battle of Stalingrad like moths to a flamethrower. The very name evokes images of grinding slaughter and inhuman sacrifice. So we're de-frosting our Nebelwerfers in anticipation of the *Stalingrad* RTS from DTF Games. Based on Nival's attractive *Blitzkrieg* engine, it promises to trace the desperate struggles for the grain elevator, the railway station and the tractor plant with a keen eye for historical detail. DTF are taking the opportunity to overhaul the *Blitzkrieg* interface and combat system too. *Stalingrad* will hit the shops at Christmas. **www.stalingrad-game.com/en**.

Damn all this war

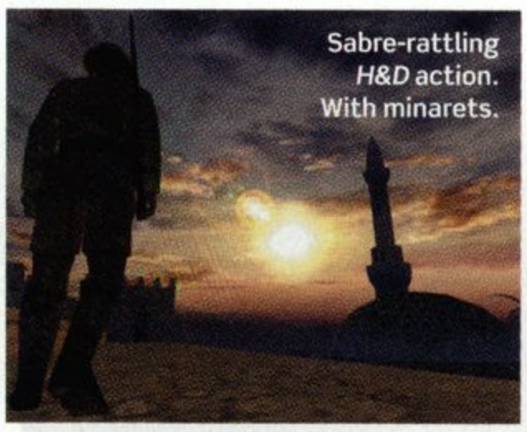
Meanwhile, the Australian army plans to spice up officers' history lessons with *Combat Mission Afrika Korps*. QV Software have placed an order for a special version so they can replay 1940-1943 engagements in Greece, Crete and North Africa. Who says the military always plan for the last war? And while we're loafing in the Med, spare a moment for Panther Games' *Conquest of the Aegean*, follow-up to the much-loved *Highway to the Reich*. Expect another vast operational wargame featuring an intriguing 'what if' scenario where the Germans assault the British island fortress of Malta. **www matrixgames.com**.

Send me a signal. Contact Mark at
pcga@derwenthoward.com.au

THIS IS...

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

Nine missions, four new locations, three new deathmatches, two new multiplayer missions... and a cartridge in a pear tree. That's the sum of additions for the newly announced *Hidden & Dangerous 2* expansion pack that clever Czech coders Illusion Softworks are knocking together for us all. Currently saddled with the moniker *Sabre Squadron*, it'll no doubt be the thinking man's shooter, er, expansion.



Alien syndrome

Emerging from the workshop come COR Entertainment with a downloadable beta of their FPS *Alien Arena*, now a standalone product. AA marries the tourney-styled deathmatch format with the sci-fi universe of CodeRED. Just like the big guns in tournament DM such as *UT2004* or *Quake 3*, *Alien Arena* caters for those who like to go it alone against bots.

There are six maps available, five character types, and several modes of play, both free-for-all in nature, as well as team-based scenarios (yes, even with bots).

Finally, a major bug has been discovered in *Thief: Deadly Shadows*. Save during a mission then reload, and the game resets the difficulty level to Normal. This means anyone boasting their 1337ness by saying they finished it on Hard will have been playing on Normal for most of the game.

Dan 'Deadeye' Toose

Spray that again? Contact Craig at
dan@derwenthoward.com.au

James 'Wizball' Cottee

THIS IS...

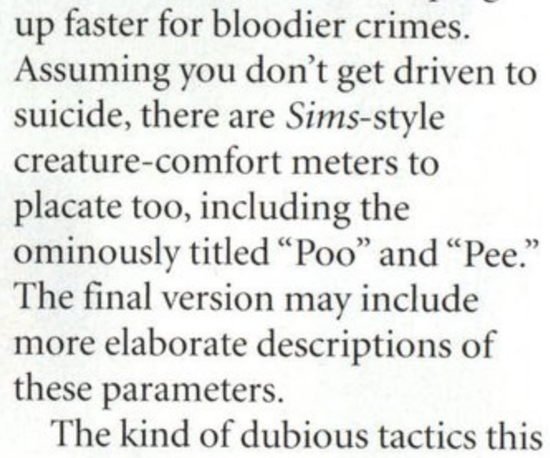
ODDBALL

Murder, murder, murder. Remember back when it was shocking? When it was a crime to be punished, not an exercise in ideological showboating? Well, Outerlight sure do, and rather than just idly pine for re-runs of *Murder She Wrote*, they've developed a *Half-Life* mod where taking human life has consequences. *The Ship* is the diametric opposite of *The Love Boat*, a murder marathon where getting caught means getting busted. Avoiding security cameras, guards, and the eyes of other passengers, you've got to hunt down your arbitrarily chosen quarry and do them in.

When Sims go bad

Of course, your random cruise ship identity is on someone else's hit list, so play is defined by paranoia as much as stealth. Think you can get around this by simply killing anyone who looks at you funny? That's where the Trauma bar comes in, creeping up faster for bloodier crimes. Assuming you don't get driven to suicide, there are *Sims*-style creature-comfort meters to placate too, including the ominously titled "Poo" and "Pee." The final version may include more elaborate descriptions of these parameters.

The kind of dubious tactics this sort of gaming could unleash beggars the imagination – toilet camping, anyone? For the time being, *The Ship* is a free download from **www.theshiponline.com** and follow the signs to another exercise in cold-blooded, brown trousered murder. Colonel Mustard will never know what hit him.



Waste of space? Fill Jimbob in at
jcottee@derwenthoward.com.au

Eyewitness Investigation

POWER UP: HOW VIDEOGAMES WILL CHANGE POLITICS

Oi! Bush. Forget Osama bin Laden. Your new enemy is... Hulk Hogan

Special Report

You're controlling Hulk Hogan, but this is no wrestling game. Instead, the Hulk is explaining the impact of White House policies on the Federal Deficit. "When Bill Clinton took office in 1992, he intentionally reversed the Reagan and Bush formulas, raising taxes on the wealthy and reducing them for the lowest wage earners." Hulk knows his stuff. "Many Republicans predicted the arrival of the apocalypse. Bob Dole said the stock market would collapse... Between 1992 and 2000, the US economy produced the longest sustained economic expansion in US history." Then, to the sounds of "I am a real American" Hulk goes for his special move, leg-dropping George and Barbara Bush as they copulate.

This is a single scene from *Bushgame*, a videogame which takes the medium beyond entertainment and into the realms of political protest. It's the hilarious creation of Jason Oda, a 23-year-old graphic artist living in Boston. During a chat with his friends about politics, Jason realised that, although they shared many of the same beliefs, their arguments were limited. "The epiphany came at a bar," says Jason. "My friends were liberals who also hated Bush, but the bulk of their anti-Bush argument was comprised of very simple sentiment, things like 'Just listen to him talk, he's so dumb and war bent.' It's not that they're uninformed, it's just that this information is spread out all over the place."

Jason struck upon a novel way to help. "I wanted to give my friends some solid statistics they could reference to form a better argument." Instead of simply writing them down, he created a videogame, built specifically to illustrate his point of view. Rather than simply speaking the truth, he let his audience *play* with the truth. *Bushgame* is a political plaything – one of the first to genuinely demonstrate the potential of games to inform and educate. And it actually hits home.

Here's an example: after breaking through White House security you find yourself caught in a lecture on finance. Instead of merely pointing out that America has an enormous and growing deficit, you ride the vast debt pile downwards, through the floor, into hell. It's a striking image –

HOWARD DEAN

A political animal
Special move Dean Scream.
His mission Unperturbed by his trouncing in the Democratic primaries Dean is still desperate to find a way into the White House.

HOWARD STERN

Off the air?
Special move Porn Star Attack
His mission The Clearchannel Broadcasting Corp have cancelled Howard's radio show, after pressure from the FCC (the US media watchdog). Now, he's mad.

JOHN KERRY

The next American president?
Special move Blazing Sword of Voltron
His mission He's trouncing Bush in the polls, and he could be the last hope for the free world. But first, he has to break into the Oval Office to stop Bush and Voltron.

HULK HOGAN

A real American
Special move Hulkamania
His mission He's witnessed first-hand the destruction caused by Voltron. He's the first celebrity to organise a fight-back, calling on his allies Mr T and the morbidly obese He-Man to help him.

made more so by simple game interactivity.

According to Jason, videogames offer a potent political platform. "It's easier and more powerful to explain things with visual aids than to throw words, numbers and statistics at people in a text format," he argues. "It requires a lot of research and reading just to be informed beyond the obvious. Videogames

You ride the vast debt pile downwards into hell

today can expect to occupy the viewer's attention longer than political cartoons, enabling the artist to get more specific about the issues, and present detailed arguments."

And they happen to be fun. "I think it's very hard to consider my game to be completely serious. It's a type of modern political cartoon. Like a political cartoon, it should be funny, so as to entertain, but also hint at something more serious in nature."

And it is *extremely* funny. Jason's bad taste knows no boundaries, and he pulls no punches. Within seconds of loading, players are assaulted by images of the Statue of Liberty being sodomised by the new Secretary of State for Modern Conservatism, aka the evil Voltron.

"Hey Voltron," says Darth Rumsfeld. "Say something compassionate and conservative."

"I AM A MACHINE FUELLED BY OIL AND THE BLOOD OF FOREIGNERS."

"The best comedies are those with a heavy mix of tragedy," says Jason. "Using pop culture icons like Mr T or Paris Hilton are just an easy way to add colour to the plot, and help spell out the issues in a fun and relevant way. Mr T. is fighting cancer in real life, and our healthcare system is a mess... there's a plot right there."

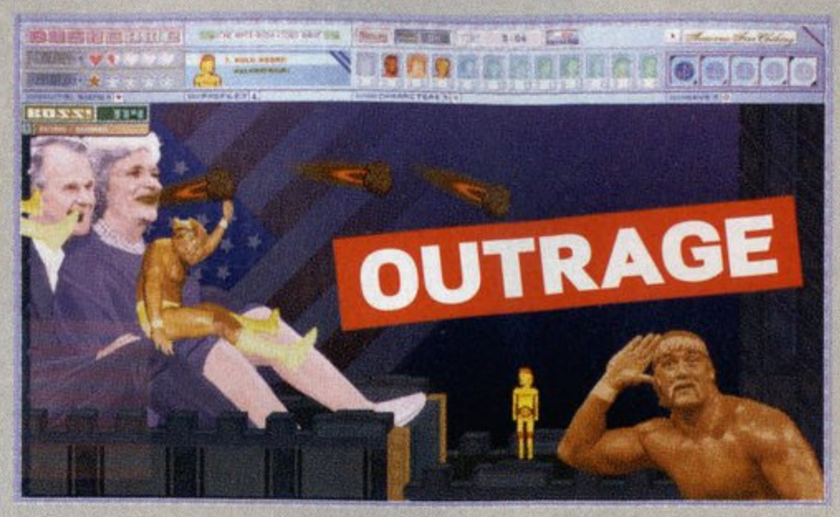
Could this be the future of politics? Maybe. *Bushgame* points the way, and already John Kerry's official website is following Jason's lead by illustrating some of their arguments with small webgames. Jason has big ideas. "I still think that any innovative medium that communicates with good artistry and informed politics will get people's attention. But for now few people have the time, energy or interest combined to do this type of work." Just one more reason to play *Bushgame*.

TIM EDWARDS

LINK

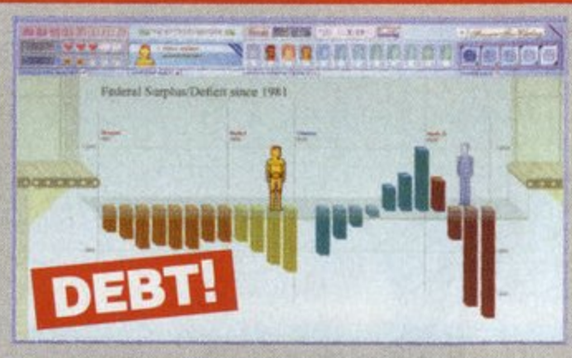
www.bushgame.com

Download here. Warning: contains scenes of graphic violence against statues.



Reasons to be fearful...

You should write to your MP

SCANDAL	REASON
	The federal deficit is spelled out: it's big. And the visual language of games is used to make the point stick.The graph is a physical object: you can jump up and down on its bars and see the deficit balloon.
	As you dash through the White House, you come across greedy corporate pig-men, with their faces buried in the trough of capitalism. Who's that in the corner? Could it be Colin Powell?
	Welcome to the Wheel of Tax breaks with your host, Richard Ashburton, in an AT-ST. And we have a special guest spinning the wheel - a senile Ronald Reagan dressed in a bikini.
	The FCC has crashed through the White House walls in Janet Jackson's nipple. They're holding freedom of speech advocates, including Howard Stern hostage. Now they must pay.
	The forces of Good have control of Voltron but a nuclear missile is heading towards Washington. Mr T, the morbidly obese He-Man, and Hulk Hogan are powerless to stop it.
	Armageddon has arrived: George W has mutated into a three headed pig-hawk beast. The Earth's only hope is John Kerry, helicoptered in to save the day by wearing Voltron's trousers. Madness.

THE FORCE COMMANDER
Bolstering his unitsí abilities as he enters the field, the Force Commander has access to key Marine operational technologies. Alongside the immensely powerful thunder hammer he can also call down orbital strikes on enemy positions.

THE BLOODTHIRSTER
The ultimate unit in the Chaos Marine army is the demonic Bloodthirster. Towering four times the height of a man, heís capable of chewing up any number of troops ñ until some very big guns are thrown at him.

They fit all this in 40k?

Warhammer 40k Dawn of War

RELEASE OCTOBER

Relic's RTS take on *Warhammer 40,000* is coming together fast. It seems like every time we see this game of far-future, apocalyptic warfare in action, a new colour has been added to the palette of treats. That's why, this month, we thought we'd throw two of the game's most vibrant elements into sharp relief: super-units and battlefield tactics.

Every tech-tree in every RTS has its high branches, and usually lurking at the top is a piece of uber kit so powerful that Donald Rumsfeld has sweaty dreams of owning it. *Dawn of War* is no exception. But the main difference here is that each of the four army's ultimate weapons are embodied by a single, vastly powerful battlefield unit: the leader.

Leaders are the figureheads of an army, and come in many forms, from the battle-hardened Marine Commander, veteran of a thousand campaigns, to the Chaos army's big gun: the Bloodthirster, a towering horned demon born from the miasmic ethers of warp space. It's a reflection of the original tabletop game - leaders lead from the front, and they lead by example.

THE PITCH
Games Workshopís sci-fi tabletop game brought to life as a SFX-drenched RTS spectacular.

As in most RTS games, the rank-and-file are the backbone of your army, and are expendable to a degree. Squeezing the most out of the grunts' sadly limited lifespan is the name of the game. Fight from good positions in cover, pitch troops against enemies that are susceptible to their specialist attacks and, above all, keep their morale up. When a unit loses its bottle in *Dawn of War*, its effectiveness is slashed. But add a leader to a bunch of ordinary troops and their abilities soar. Their aim improves, their weapons hit harder, and they'll withstand a much greater pounding before their nerve cracks. Still, when the chips are down, the true measure of a leader's worth is always in his combat abilities.

ON THE DVD An expanded version of this article awaits your pleasure > Resources.

Your standard grunt fights with low-level weapons: a blade and a pistol, just enough to take down an enemy soldier. For the most part, troops lack killer hand-to-hand weapons, and this gap can be plugged using a leader. The Marine Force Commander, for example, wields a mighty Thunder Hammer, powerful enough to rip through body armour, bowl over multiple enemies or crack a vehicle's armoured hull like a walnut. His inclusion can turn a standard unit of troops into a deadly strike weapon. And by the same token, the squad he joins provides a certain amount of incidental protection for him - after all, he's a lot less likely to take hits when he's mixed in with a large bunch of cannon fodder.

A third mighty strike: *Crump!*

Watching rival leaders clash head-to-head is an awesome sight to behold. One of the scenes we witnessed involved a Marine Commander battling a demonic Bloodthirster. As the two super warriors charged towards each other, the battle seemed cut-and-dried from the outset, as a Bloodthirster literally towers over a human. But as the blows began to hit home, the fight became more even-handed.

A gargantuan swipe from the Bloodthirster's man-sized axe sent the Marine flying, but a return blow from the Thunder Hammer sent the demon staggering. When another blow left it swaying like a willow tree, the Marine saw his opportunity and leapt onto the demon's back. After a struggle reminiscent of Starship Troopers (remember Rico jumping on the carapace of that huge plasma bug?), the Marine drew back his mighty hammer, and landed a blow squarely on the demon's gigantic, steely cranium: *Crump!*

The Bloodthirster dropped to his knees. Another blow: *Crump!* The creature was on all fours. A third mighty strike: *Crump!*

The demon lay prostrate on the floor. The marine leapt off to deliver the coup-de-grace, raising his hammer aloft, bringing it down on the foul creature's skull, and crushing it like a Doc Marten stamping on a box of eggs. *CRUMP!* ▶

HE DREADS NOUGHT
The Marine Dreadnought isn't just a walking gun turret; itís also a mincing machine in hand-to-hand combat, and weíre not talking John Inman here. Its huge power-fist is one of the few weapons that can hurt a Bloodthirster. Throw him into the fray.

THE MADDING CROWD
There may be a struggle raging between the gods, but the battle-lines are drawn with troops. Without plenty of grunts handy to support attacks and grab key Strategic Points (see overleaf), the battleís as good as lost.

WARHAMMER 40K DAWN OF WAR

The arachnoid Defilers: the Chaos hordeís answer to the Dreadnought.

The Avatar is the living embodiment of the Eldar war god. He adds muscle to their advanced but fragile troops.

The feature that made this battle even more impressive was the slo-mo function. It enables players to view the titanic struggles at leisure, from any angle - perfect for capturing the moment of victory with a screenshot. For obvious reasons, this is something Relic have made available in the singleplayer game only.

Resources in *Dawn of War* aren't mined, or grown, or harvested. The fact is, you've got a whacking great mothership in space, packed to the bulkheads with soldiery, tanks and dreadnoughts, so why would you need to harvest? Nope, to get the hardware planet-side, you need to impress the Top Brass upstairs, and to do that, you must capture SPs - Strategic Points.

Dotted across the map, SPs symbolise territorial advantage. Troop units can be ordered to capture them, at which point builder units can build radar stations to clear the fog of war, and gun turrets to protect the area from incursion. But crucially, SPs supply you with Requisition Points, or RPs. This reflects High Command acknowledging your growing contribution to the war effort, and supporting you with more arms for the fight. RPs are drip-fed, but you can speed up supply by capturing more SPs. RPs can then be spent to call in new units, or upgrade existing technologies.

Special Strategic Points, known as Relics (there are normally only one or two per map), represent locations of tactical importance. Glorious capture of these hotspots can unlock elite units on the tech tree. As a Space Marine Commander, you don't get uber-units like Terminators every day - only when there's something damned important to protect.

The correlation between SPs and troop disposition is an obvious one. Unlike a traditional RTS - Warcraft, for example - Battles in *Dawn of War* are generally fought on the front line, as armies expand and clash over SPs. It's extremely hard to charge straight into an enemy's base and start pounding on his structures. You've got to gain the tactical upperhand first. Or die trying.

Battles are fought on the front line

AL BICKHAM

READ ME

Publisher THQ
Developer Relic
Web www.dawnofwargame.com
Looks incredible, stays true to the original game, should be a winner.

TURRETS SYNDROME

The only reason you can see a turret here is because itís protecting a Space Marine base. The very nature of the terrain prevents you from setting up turrets wherever you like. If youíre a 'hedgehogí player, who likes to slowly build an impregnable fortress, youíll have to learn some new tricks..

STRATEGIC POINTS

Battles are fought for possession of these resource hotspots. They mark the outer limits of your expansion, and the front lines ebb and flow around them.

THE BEST FORM OF DEFENCE...

Itís vital to defend your strategic points, and nothing smells of defence quite like a squad of Space Marines toting heavy weapons. Different races obviously field different units and, therefore, require different tactics. The ancient Eldar, for example, have the Wraithlord (the Eldar equivalent to the Dreadnought), but Eldar units tend towards the fragile. However, theyíre fast and hard-hitting, making static defence less useful than the hit-and-run harrying of an enemyís flanks.

KANNED HEAT

Assaulting a strategic point means bringing in the big guns, as the Orks are attempting to do with this Dreadnought-equivalent Killa Kan. Despite seemingly backward technology, the Ork race has some fearsome units at its disposal. Another of their killer apps is the Squiggoth, an alien mammoth that stomps on men and vehicles alike.

An Eldar Wraithlord (Dreadnought type) performs open heart surgery on a minion of Chaos.

Two massive Defilers perform a pincer movement. Thank you, you've been a lovely audience.

Leaving on a jet pack

RELEASE OCTOBER

Tribes Vengeance

Back with a Vengeance, so to speak. Ahahaha.

THE PITCH
Sci-fi FPS meets clan warfare, spiced with jet packs, ski tracks and airborne attacks.

Tribes' team-based multiplayer world has never enjoyed the popularity it deserves. It's been sustained for the last five years by a small but uber-dedicated community that has earned the game a reputation as one of *the* hardcore online FPSs. But hopes are high that part three will appeal to a far more widespread audience now that itís fallen into the hands of former *System Shock 2* developers, Irrational Games.

They hope to achieve this partly through a complex and pan-generational single-player campaign. But also by creating the fastest, most frenzied 32 player experience possible.

What makes Tribes so exciting? Jet packs. With this one feature, FPS gaming is instantly transformed from a single horizontal plane to a multi-dimensional space. Looking in front and behind is not nearly enough here. Your rocket-powered backpack allows a generously prolonged leap through the mountainous skies of this sci-fi war zone. Essentially, *Tribes* lets you fly.

And if not with your jet pack, then in one of the various airbound contraptions stationed at your team's base. In the usual multiplayer scenarios (capture the flag, capture the base, among others) the endless assault requires an intense teamwork.

'Skiing' remains a distinctive feature in Tribes

And this was never more satisfying than when conducted from the skies, in one of the single-person fighters. These extremely vulnerable machines let loose an imposing flurry of rockets from on high and can wreak havoc among enemy ground vehicles, if used effectively. But if used ineffectively, you can be shot down by a couple of bullets.

Jet pack 'skiing' remains a distinctive feature. Originally a bug, holding down Jump when you land avoids the restraints of friction and lets you 'skií down mountainsides at absurd speed. Skate through the back entrance of the enemy base, snatch the flag, and then right-click: pow, youíre back in the air and on your perilous journey home.

JOHN WALKER

README

Publisher Vivendi
Developer Irrational Games
Link www.irrationalgames.com
The speed and airborne antics of Tribes, with a promising single-player campaign to boot.

Make fantastic leaps! Manoeuvring in the air is now much easier thanks to the new-improved jet pack.

Face it, youíre going to have a lot of fun in a buggy like that.

Oi! Keep that racquet down

Top Spin

Top Spin on Xbox is the *Pro Evolution Soccer* of tennis games. It's immediately accessible and fun while offering a depth of play rarely found in any sports game. Prolonged play reveals the game's secrets in manageable chunks. You feel yourself improving as you play, just like in any real sport. And that's the brilliant hook that makes *Top Spin* more addictive than any tennis game has a right to be.

So naturally we're delighted that Atari have decided to serve PC owners with a port. The core of the game appears to remain intact, including the quirky career mode. Playing like an RPG, you start at the bottom of the rankings and work you're way up to the Number One spot. You can pick from 32 real-world players or create your own, and then work to improve your stats over time. Although you'll begin your furry-balled career on less salubrious courts, soon you'll be smashing and lobbing at Flushing Meadows, Roland Garros, Wimbledon or more than 40 others. No skimping there.

Four basic shots are augmented by an optional 'risk shot'. A risk shot can turn a safe play into an audacious winner by pulling off a tricky combo with precision timing. Get it right and your player will fire a specutacular shot that's nigh on unreturnable.

Top Spin's mighty multiplayer mode was the real winner on Xbox though. LAN and Internet modes are promised for PC but we still await confirmation of the all-important two-up on a single PC.

Smashing and lobbing at Flushing Meadows

Though the port is happily being handled by its orginal Xbox developers, the PC version will stand or fall on the sensitivity and precision of the control system. A good analogue gamepad will be vital and, if they get it right, then *Top Spin* could not only be the best tennis game yet seen, but the best sports game. Well, the rest of the industry may have something to say about that though.

ROSS ATHERTON

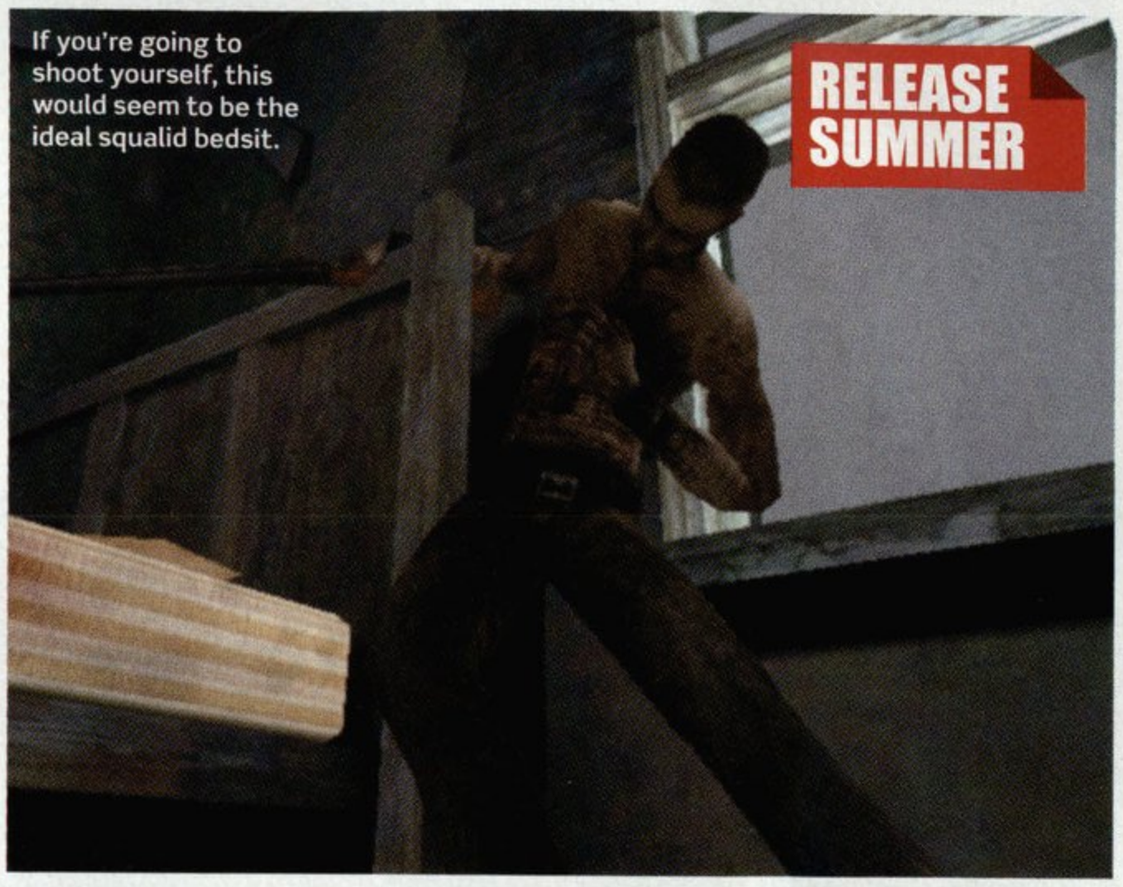
README

Publisher Atari
Developer PAM Studios
Link www.atari.com
A genuinely exciting sports prospect.It may be tennis, but we can't wait.

Bullet-time in a tennis game. Now *there's* an idea.

HP's scary sauce

Call of Cthulhu



If you're going to shoot yourself, this would seem to be the ideal squalid bedsit.

Thief: Deadly Shadows reminded us just how rarely we're scared by games. It also reminded us just how scary games can be, even more so than films, or Glaswegians. And that's why we're keeping our eyes on stalks for *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth*. It may just have the the nerve to match the shock tactics of *Thief* and *Doom 3* and be a truly frightening PC experience.

Call of Cthulhu refers to HP Lovecraft's influential early 20th Century horror writings. His 'mythos' of alien gods, secret histories and cosmic terror has shaped the work of horror writers, artists and film-makers across the globe. It also spawned a hugely influential pen-and-paper RPG that was as inspirational as the author himself for its UK developers Headfirst.

Has every chance of standing alongside *Doom 3*

Dark Corners of the Earth attempts to break free from genre constraints in an admirable number of areas. Although ostensibly a first-person shooter, with the perspective and gun-play that suggests, some comforting staples are absent. No heads-up display informs you of health or ammo status, and the obvious vulnerability of your character (mental patient Jack Walters) advises against gleeful bullet-spewing rampages. In fact, you're more likely to find Jack gibbering in terror, unable to aim as an increasingly horrifying environment causes his aim to veer, his view to shake and, in extremis, him to turn the gun on himself. Now *that's* game over.

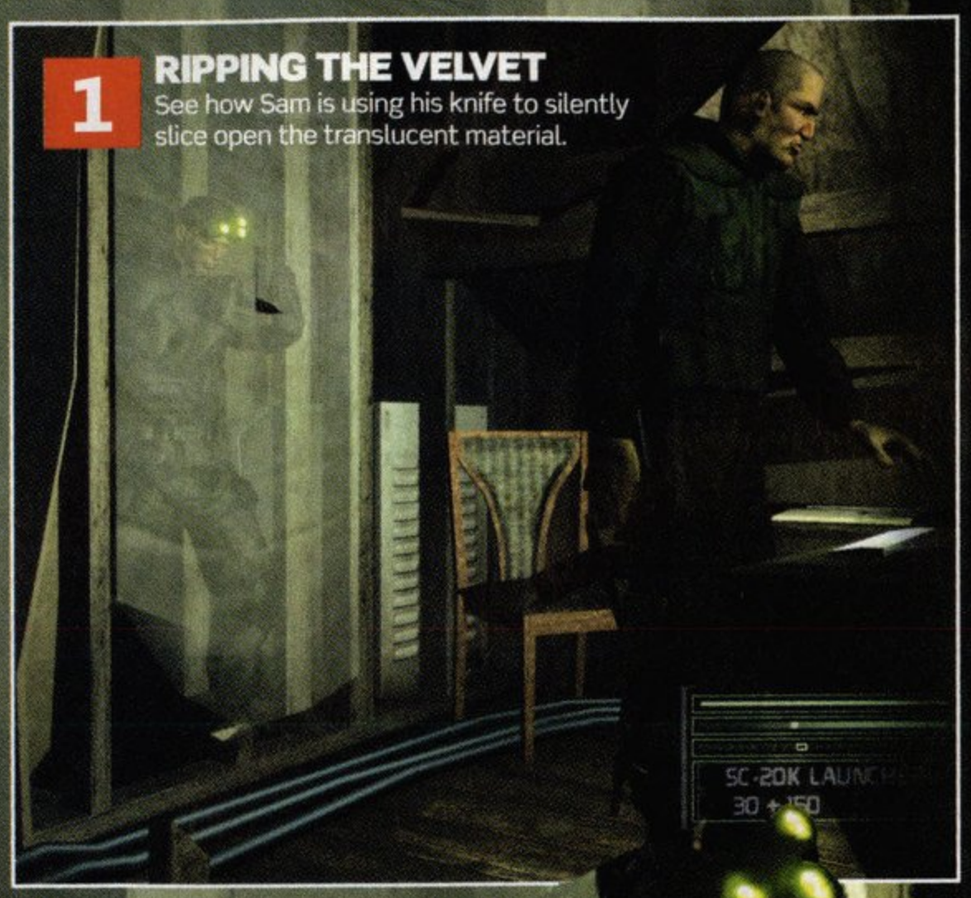
This Sanity feature – raised by encountering hideous alien beasts or mutilated corpses, lowered by resting in safe areas or dispatching evil enemies – is more subtle than *The Suffering*'s and helps shift *Cthulhu*'s focus from monster-battering to pure survival. And that won't be easy, because injuries can't be dealt with by running over a health pick-up. Bandages and splints must be applied individually to appropriate wounds; a real-world aesthetic that is carried throughout the game.

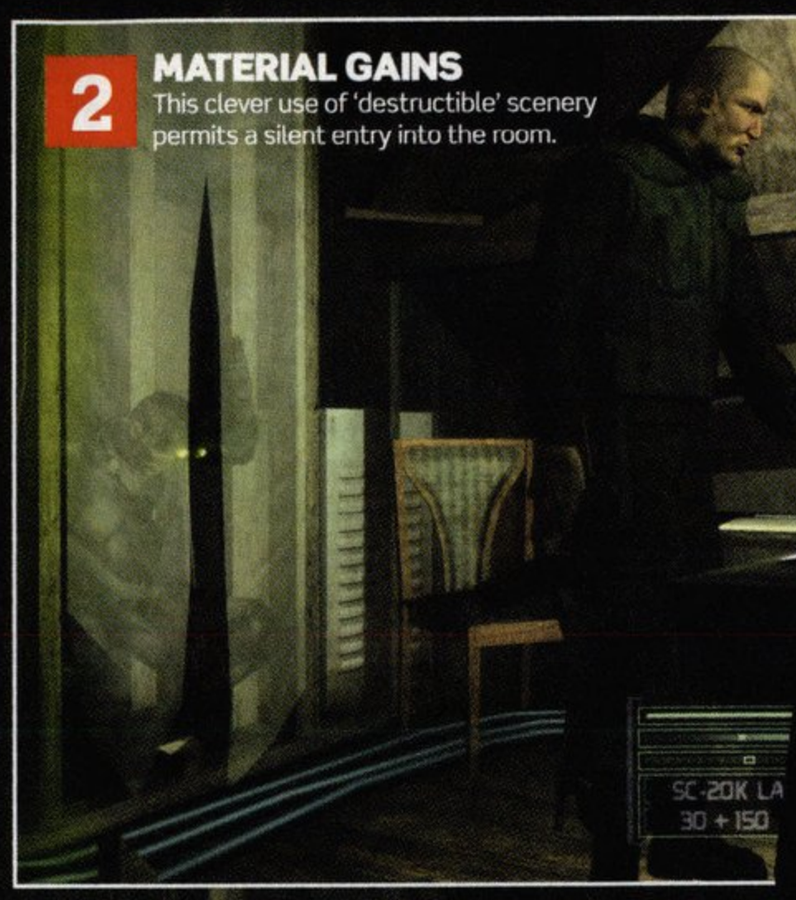
If fear is an emotion which is largely fostered through loss of control and vulnerability, *Dark Corners* has every chance of standing alongside the likes of *Doom 3* in the scary stakes. If Headfirst's characterisation and atmosphere are successful, it could even surpass them.

ROSS ATHERTON

README

Publisher Bethesda
Developer Headfirst
Link www.callofcthulhu.com
HP Lovecraft's notorious tales come to digital life in a novel take on first-person action.


1
RIPPING THE VELVET
See how Sam is using his knife to silently slice open the translucent material.
SC-20K LAUNCHER
30 + 150


2
MATERIAL GAINS
This clever use of 'destructible' scenery permits a silent entry into the room.
SC-20K LA
30 + 150

3 IN FOR THE KILL
Cat-like Sam creeps up behind the target. Will he give him a big hug? Pop a chip-packet to make him jump? Or brutally murder him, leaving the corpse folded up in a cupboard?

Written by Craig Pearson

LOOK OUT BEHIND... SPLINTER CELL 3

RELEASE CHRISTMAS

It's not exactly a hard cell...

Crikey! It was only a few issues ago when we reviewed the last *Splinter Cell* game. The fear of a rush job is palpable, but it's quickly, easily swept away by the sheer beauty and panache of the Fisher king's new game. The next generation? It's here already.

Ubisoft came out of the shadows and invited PC GAMES ADDICT over for a briefing on their next big job. As the curtains are drawn, the projector whirrs into life, and the magic begins...We're in Hokkaido, Japan. A traditional Japanese house sits on the edge of a cliff. Sam Fisher, spy, family man, black-rubber fanatic, is cloaked in darkness. His insertion point is below a waterfall. The ever-present voice of Lambert feeds the mission straight into his earpiece. The goal is to find and interrogate a man named Morganholt, and exterminate his protector Mylon Nedich. As Sam puts it: "Isolate. Simplify. Complete."

Up ahead, the guard stands near a swinging paper lamp. The guards in *SC3* still react to broken lights, moving to investigate any changes. This guard, however, lights up a flare and scours the immediate area. His sweeping movement with the flare is far more dangerous than a static lamp, the flickering fire casting jagged shadows and spikes of luminescence. Taking out a light is a double-edged sword, now.

Sam takes the guard out with a bullet to the temples. It's worth pointing out that this is the only long-distance takedown of the whole level. Ubisoft Montreal want to take the player closer to the action: to that end, Sam now has a knife to hand, that he reaches for in anticipation of a close termination. It's a swift, brutal death, slicker than the cumbersome grab-and cosh of the previous games. It's not just for making human steak, either: the knife can also be used to pass silently through hanging material, slicing it lengthways, enabling easy passage.

It's a swift, brutal death

Two minutes in and it's already information overload. Mathieu Ferland, Producer, sets the scene: "In *SC3*, players are rewarded if they can get closer and closer. They'll experiment with close stealth actions, and get more accurate hints about the mission." ▶

Sam Fisher's back, and this time it's impersonal. Again.

DID YOU HEAR SOMETH-

"Huh, raining on guard duty. Can't get any worse than this."

Sneaking into the building, we're introduced to another of Sam's new abilities. He grips a pipe above, flips upside-down and dangles from his legs. As the unsuspecting guard passes below, Sam grabs him, pulls him off his feet and snaps his neck. This is another 'hands-on' addition to his arsenal: where in previous games a gun was used, here Fisher digs his fingers tight into the Adam's apple of the poor soul, lifts him off the ground and crushes the life out of him. Those interrogation techniques come in handy.

The drop-and-snap is an important addition to the game: Ubisoft's development team have worked hard making everything contextually fulfiling. If Sam can dangle from a pipe, why not give him a neck-snapping ability? The team have came up with many such touches: such as Sam being able to drag someone's feet out from under them if they're on a higher level, or the ability to grab through a paper wall. If you think you can do it, you usually can.

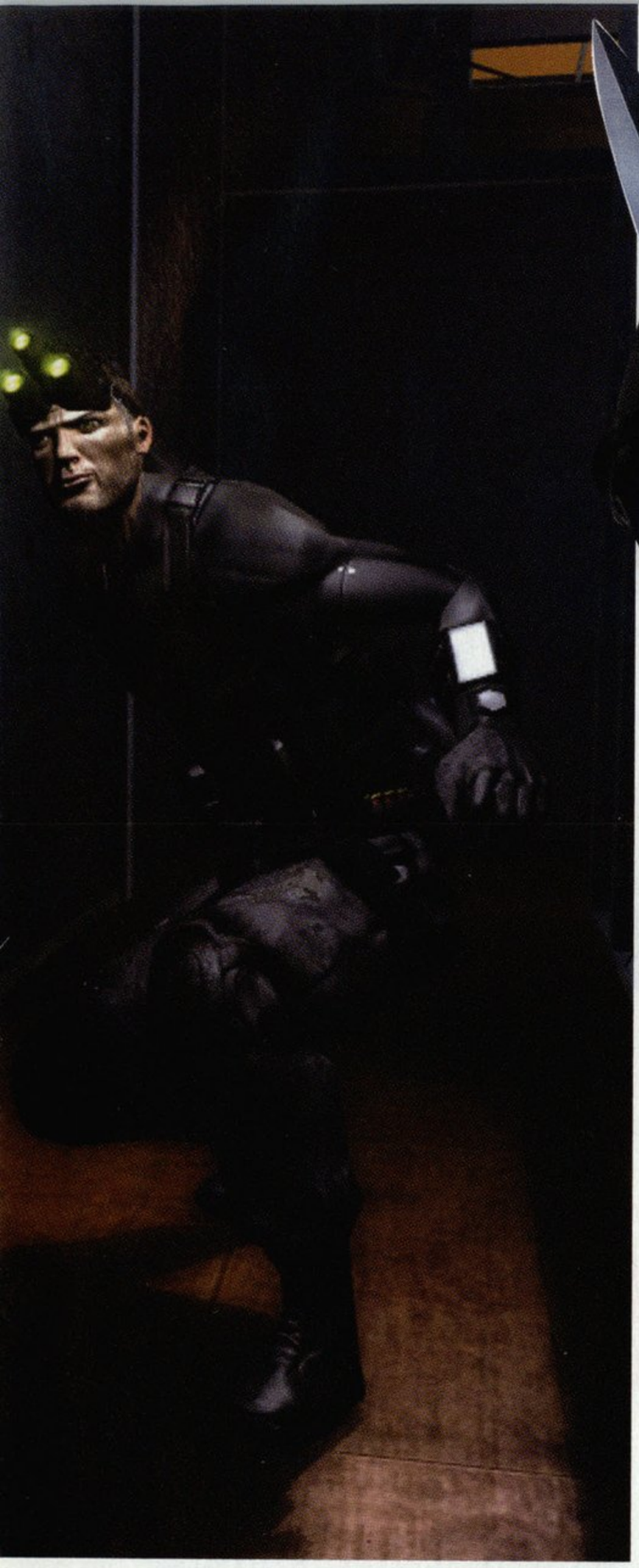
There are often two or more methods of approaching situations. Stealth is the ultimate goal, but with the new shotgun attachment (you have one main gun, but with several fire modes) you can also confront guards head-on in a all-out assault. It's still a risky business, and trying it against an overwhelming number of guards will reduce you to a pulp in double-quick time, unless you find a dark spot to hide in.

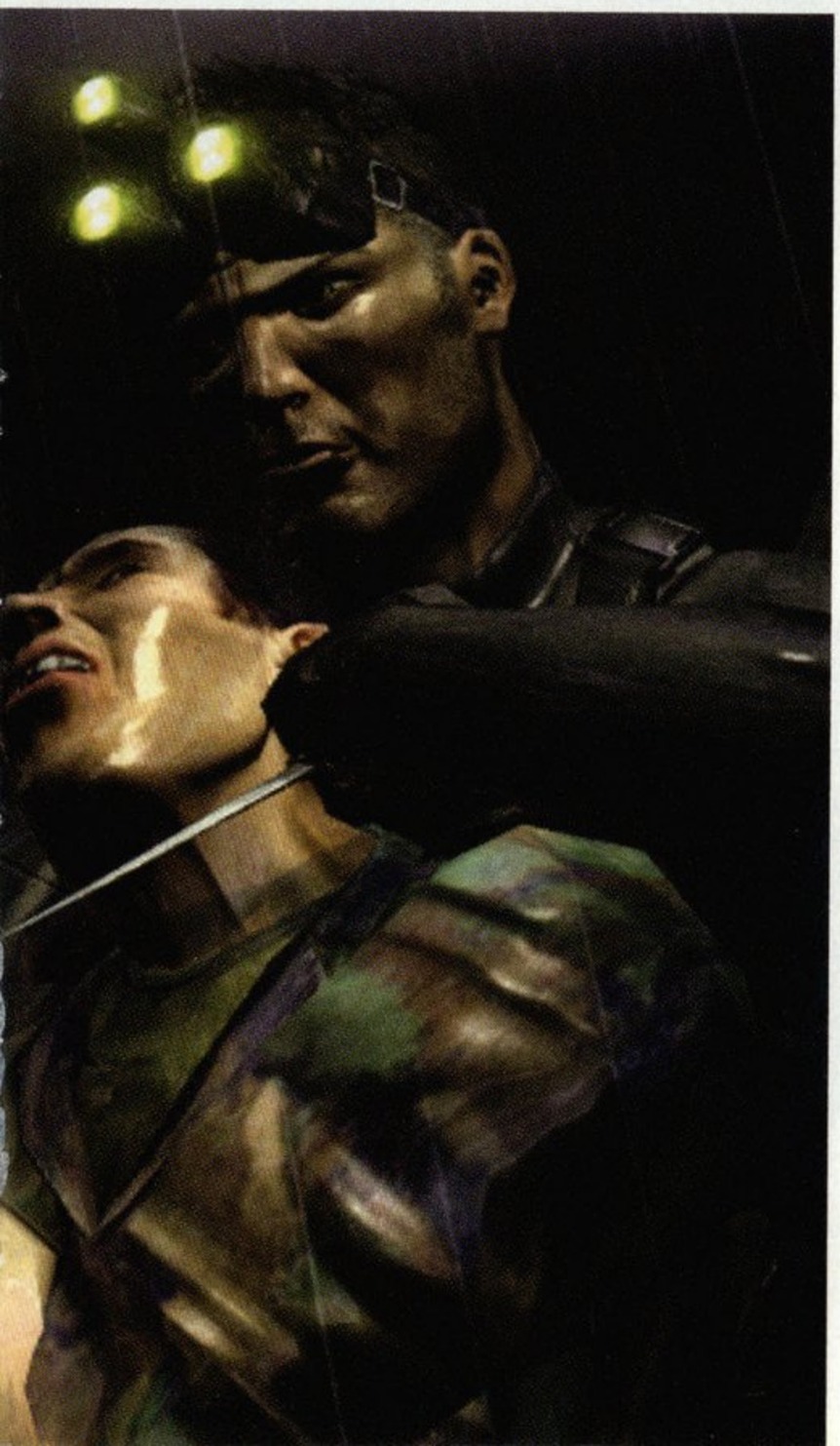
The lighting, always a strong point of *SC*, is a leap forward. A strong natural tone permeates, and the paper walls of the Japanese house are the perfect way to show it off. The shadows cast on the walls can be seen on the other side, and the light source makes a huge difference. As Fisher first enters the house, he clocks a guard and blows out a small candle illuminating the room. A guard outside the room investigates the dousing and relights the candle, unaware that Sam's there in the dark. It's up to you to choose when the attack will come, and in what way. This time, Sam nipped around behind the guard and waited for the candle to be lit. Once the guard was dispatched, the candle was blown out again, a final kick in the teeth.

SC3's lighting prowess is demonstrated through a series of

SC3 runs on an updated version of the *SC1* engine. Constant modification, ever since the first tweaking of the *Unreal* engine brought us *Splinter Cell*, has created a superb-looking game. The new incarnation includes ragdoll physics, per-pixel lighting and completely rewritten AI routines. It was already gorgeous before, but now it's taking on the next generation engines.

OK, what's scariest here – the fact that Sam is cutting some poor soul's throat, or the weird, faraway look in his eyes as he's doing it? The man looks as if he's wondering what he'll have for dinner tonight.





mini demos. Fisher sneaks through a cave, pushes his way through a makeshift door and out into the black of night. He's in a coastal area, a lighthouse turning to the far left, catching the spray and fog in its beam. Lightning spills overhead, jaggedly illuminating the area ahead. Even the small lamps to one side side catch the mist rolling off the sea. A guard is dispatched by knocking him face first into the water, and then Fisher makes his way to the lighthouse. It begins to rain, and we watch another guard move from the rain into a covered area – perfectly placed for Sam to sneak up and do him in.

We move to the top of the lighthouse, the turning beam lancing out to sea, highlighting a guard. Sam's hanging below. He leans up, pushes the guard over the side and drops him to the concrete far below. It's when Sam climbs onto the ledge of the lighthouse that you see why they're demonstrating this sequence: to show off. The light beams are slicing through cracked, broken glass, and they're catching every bit of set-dressing detail.

Back to the Japanese house: Sam's loose, with a gaggle of patrolling guards casting shadows all around. He finds a hole and slips into a crawlspace. The room alongside the open vent is packed with guards and they're chatting about other in-game events (a ship is mentioned, expect one of the levels to take place offshore). Just as you're snug and smug in the darkness, the tension spikes as a guard drops a handful of change directly in front of you. His hand pops into view before he's ordered to leave the pittance where it lies. It's a beautifully scripted moment that leaves you feeling completely vulnerable, just as a stealth game should.

As Fisher nears the objective, there's an impressive visual display where the murder of Morganholt is shown, like demented shadow puppet theatre, on the paper walls. His murderer, Nedich, takes him out with a sword, the blurred black projections capturing the soft and hard shadows beautifully. With the intended target slain, Sam follows Nedich into the garden – and into a nest of guards. As Sam wades through them, Nedich escapes, helicopter hammering away overhead.

As the chopper pulls away, a thought occurs: we've been clamouring for photorealistic graphics for so long that the advances in sound have been overlooked: *SC3*'s sounds are beautifully immersive. In the next section, a small sequence showing off a mixture of elements, it was the sound that really stood out.

Close your eyes and you're there

Sam was following a guard through a missile stash. It's deep underground, thick walls set to protect the outside world from the force of any accidental explosion. Sam takes root in a dark corner and tosses a smoke grenade. The grenade's thick pall of smoke not only obscures the movements of the silent assassin, it also, brilliantly, sets off the sprinkler system. The guards make their way into the sodden silo, and Sam uses the newly formed pools of water to electrocute them with his sticky shocker. It's a brilliant example of the innovative nature of *Splinter Cell:* clearing that level could just as easily be done in a hail of bullets, or a series of stealthy kills.

WHAT'S THAT DO? Fisher's a covert operative, so he can't go lugging about WMD's just anywhere. Ubisoft have come up with a logical way around this: guns have two functions. The main rifle is both a brutal automatic rifle and a shotgun. The handgun houses an electronic jammer, etc.

But it also shows off the beautiful soundscape: the curved roof of the missile silo bounces the soundwaves, they come through the speakers with just the correct quality of echo you'd expect from curved concrete. If you close your eyes, you're there. The vocal tones of the characters, ▶

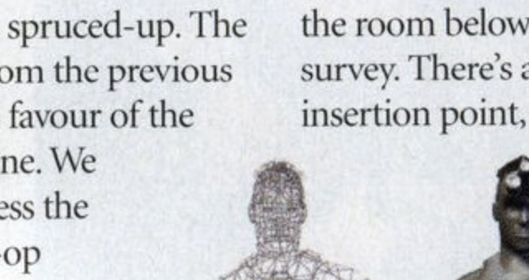
DID YOU HEAR SOMETH-

shouting instructions to each other and insults to you, as the rest take up fire positions, are mixed to perfection.

On his next objective, Sam's tracking through an empty warehouse. The bass beat of music issues from a wooden door. Sam halts and slides his optical cable under the door. The music becomes clearer as Sam is confronted with a guard's foot directly in front of the cable's lens. The guard, right behind the door, is jiggling his leg to the beat. When Sam bursts in with his brutal new 'door bash' (a weapon-ready charge), the guard is knocked clean out. The music can now be heard in its full, and rather punk, glory.

A lot of the sound is used to help you deconstruct the task ahead. Another scene has Sam sneaking into a two-level lobby. The guard ahead is leaning over the side barrier, shouting down to his cohort on the lower level. Their conversation, where the lower level guard has lost his pass-key and can't get in, is hilarious. It also tips Sam off to the fact that the stuck guard is directly below the one up ahead. Sam sneaks in tight, grabs the guard then coshes him. His body flips over the banister, crashes through a plate of glass and flattens the guard below.

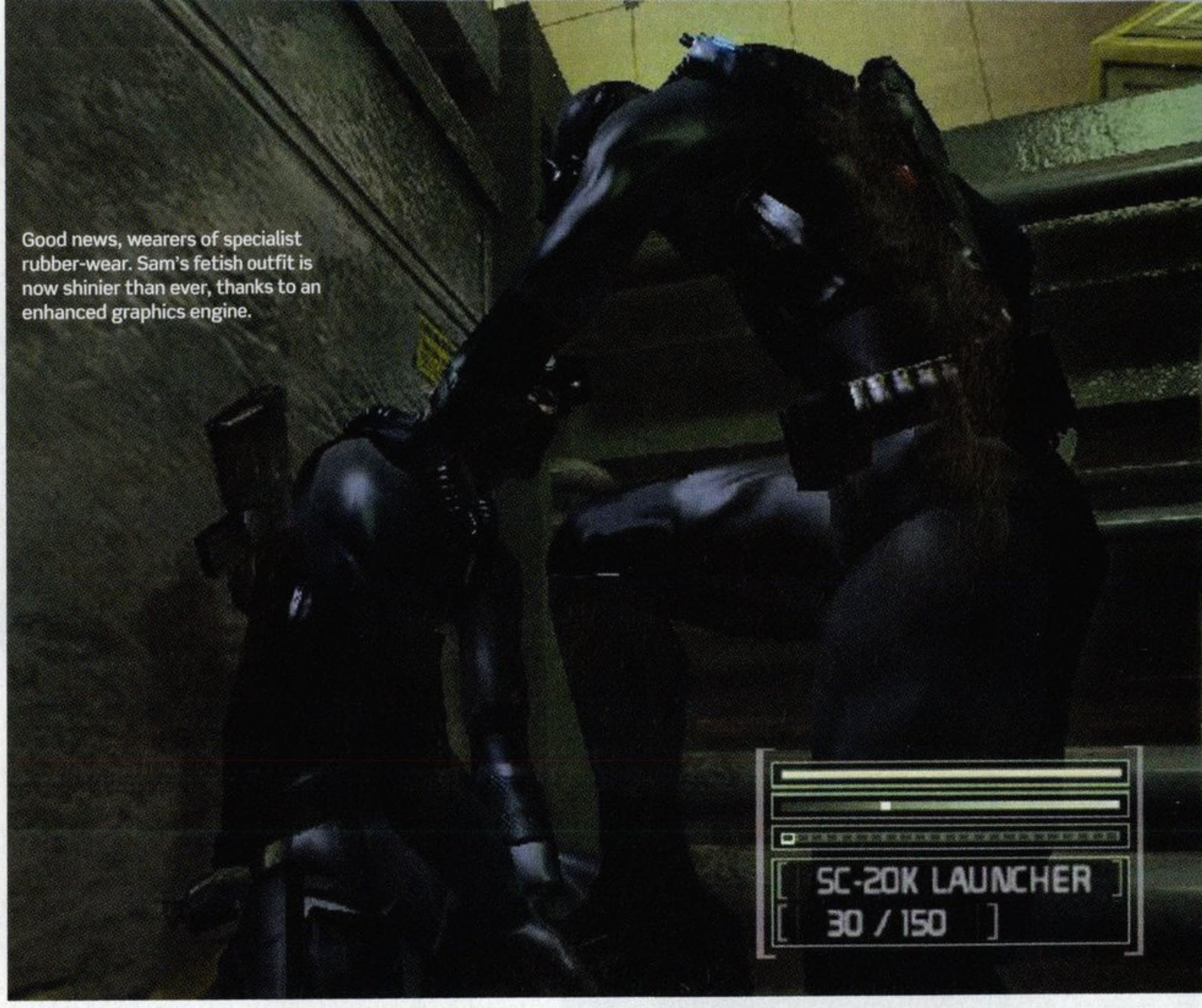
Sam himself has an ambient sound bar next to his 'stealthmeter'; his footsteps make it rise and drop. His steps react to the different surfaces: wood thumps dully, metal clangs, and carpet shuffles like a pair of slippers. It's the same for the guards, who don't have to worry about tip-toeing through the levels: a good pair of ears gives you the advantage.



JOLLY GREEN TRI-CLOPS It's never been satisfactorily explained. Super-stealthy Sam Fisher makes no sound. He wears black, and only black. He is ultra-ninja. Yet his high-tech goggles glow so brightly they could surely be spotted by any sentient goon a mile away. Still, he makes a cool corpse.

Mathieu Ferland explained the addition: "A new sound gauge has been added in order to provide the information about the level of ambient noise in a specific zone. If a zone is very noisy, Sam can obviously make more noise too. This creates situations where you may want to synchronise your moves with a repetitive noisy sound, like a clock bell for example."

The whole interface has been spruced-up. The cranky single-player interface from the previous two games has been dropped in favour of the intuitive and slick multiplayer one. We no longer needs to pause to access the inventory. *SC3*'s multiplayer co-op mode is a natural progression from *Pandora Tomorrow*'s multiplayer Spies vs Guards assault levels. Two players meet online to take on AI guards. Both players can physically use each other to get around the level. The insertion shown takes place in an office. The two operatives run to a wall with no apparent way of clearing it. The first turns his back to the wall, drops a knee and cups his hands. He boosts the other spy up to a higher ledge, allez-oop style. The spy left on the ground turns, grabs the other spy's dangling legs and uses



Good news, wearers of specialist rubber-wear. Sam's fetish outfit is now shinier than ever, thanks to an enhanced graphics engine.

him as a lumpy, rubber-clad ladder.

It's the physicality that surprises. Even the most advanced co-op games on the PC are still extensions of the singleplayer. Characters usually exist in a physical vacuum, but here they're bouncing off each other like a pair of ballroom dancers.

They don't even need to be in close proximity, either. The spies split up and go their own way. One is on a ledge, the other below. Like a well-equipped burglar, he unfurls a rope to his partner below, anchors and the other grabs the rope and walks up the wall. It's like watching two fetish-clad Spidermen.

Two players work in tandem

The final short section of the demo demonstrates how the co-op mode of *SC3* moves from stealth to spying. The pair make their way through a ventilation shaft. As they reach the opening to the room below, a sticky cam is dropped in to survey. There's an office worker near the insertion point, but the computer our spies need to access is directly below. What follows is a moment right out of Mission: Impossible: the rope comes back out again and one spy lowers his companion, upside-down, through the hole and dangles him above the computer. The dangling spy uses the computer; his fingertips flying across the keyboard, his body hanging above it like a side of beef.

As with the last game, the multiplayer feeds off of the main story, adding to the full story arc with incidental detail. It's also the domain for *Pandora Tomorrow*'s Shadownet spy team, and not Fisher.

Watching the two players work in tandem, a thought springs to mind: offline co-op mode, with bot buddies? We put the idea to Mathieu, who disabuses us. "The co-op experience is based on trust where partners need to rely on each other," he tells us. "Think of everything you can do in a single-player campaign, and expand the concept, as you are not alone anymore trying to beat NPCs. It is story-driven so, in this matter, no bots are playable".

That trust certainly plays a crucial role. It's game over if one of the team dies. Mathieu Ferland's last words: "Sam remains the only operative acting alone to solve critical situations. However, co-op 'rookie' operatives will support the main plot with side actions, sometimes nearby, sometimes not. The level design specifications to create co-op maps are quite complex, and we've decided to dedicate specific missions for co-op in order to provide the best experience as possible."

As the preview ends, a black bag is pulled over your correspondent's head. We've asked one question too many.

Sam's secret revealed: he's actually a liquid-metal Terminator from the future.

README

Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Ubisoft Montreal
Link www.ubi.com/US/Games/splinter cell3_pc.htm

If *Pandora Tomorrow* was over all too soon for you, get excited. This is more of the same, but better.

Pulling a few harp strings

Shade

RELEASE OCTOBER

Wrath of Angels

Tension often flared up between locals and students at the Bunch of Grapes.

You'll travel to far-off times, as well as distant places.

THE PITCH
Lara's best bits, with added demonic side-kicks, slashing swords and time-travelling plotline.

ON THE DISC Check out our extra selection of shady screenshots > Gallery.

Those Angels have a right to be fuming. Having missed its 2003 release date, *Shade* has been haunting the schedules for months now. Czech perfectionists Black Element are to blame, dragging the game back to the drawing board a year ago when they had a playable build of this third-person horror adventure already in the bag.

That year hasn't been wasted. A fresh graphics engine will now take advantage of DirectX 9's new bells and whistles, and the storyline has been revamped, although there's still more than a whiff of those survival horror clichés about it. You play an ex-military mercenary (yes, another one) summoned to a far-flung East European medieval town. But, oh my, it turns out to be contested by the undead and panicked locals. Luckily – sort of – a sinister spirit appears to bestow you with the power to call on an inner demon. This comes in handy because in times of trouble you can morph yourself into a horny beast pumped with otherworldly strength and black magic. And this is suddenly a time of trouble. Not to mention darkness. Refuelled by 'Angel Tears' scattered about the levels, these spells help spice up the usual combat and puzzling soup.

A horny beast pumped with otherworldly strength

The ill-advised waistcoat we saw the hero sporting last year has gone, so he no longer looks like Stephen Hendry on a killing spree. The shotgun that once had us scattering zombie chunks has also been replaced. Now our hero practises a more 'civilised' form of melee combat: swinging his magical sword in wonderful and deadly shapes that dice up the fiends in your path. The blade's glow suggestive of a medieval lightsaber.

You can still pull a pistol or crossbow, but the balance between melee and ranged weapons leans towards close-range combat. A little too much for our liking, as it happens. Putting a bullet through flopping zombie flesh proves more tricky and less effective than pulling out your glowing blade and skewering it like an undead kebab. On the other hand, level after level of swordplay could wear thin, particularly as *Shade* appears to be a sizeable yarn.

Split over four chapters, the tale spans generations, dipping into modern day settings, ancient Egypt and a mythical Shadowland environment. We're promised 30 hours of adventuring in all, with multiple endings to keep us coming back. Expect the Angels to be put out of their misery by October of this year, providing those nitpicking Czechs don't scrap the thing and start all over again, of course.

MARK SUTHERNS

README

Publisher Cenega
Developer Black Element
Link www.shade-game.com
New looks, swashbuckling swordplay, lavish environments. The real *Shade* stands up.

THE RIDE OF YOUR LIFE

We love creating deathtrap rides that catapult guests catastrophically across the park to meet a grisly end. Happily, according to Frontier's Jonny Watts, "you'll still be able to satisfy your macabre instincts, with the added 3D twist that you can now ride that doomed ride to conclusion." The addition of gibbering sound effects has yet to be confirmed.

THE ENTERTAINER

These employees wander your park with their big heads, but they're not just for show. The game's flocking algorithms mean that visitors who are interested in the same things will naturally group together; in this case, as you can see, a handful of kids have gathered (probably to push the poor bloke over). Meanwhile, these kids' families are off doing something else.

Are you ready for The Big One?

Rollercoaster Tycoon 3

RELEASE OCTOBER

Frontier Developments are clearly 'people' people. They know we're all social animals. That's why they want to hook us on *Rollercoaster Tycoon 3* by creating punters we want to get to know (and exploit, of course), as Jonny Watts, Senior Producer, explains. "The new characters have distinct ages as well as genders, ethnicity, and a wide variety of looks, which the player can customise. This is also reflected in the guests' likes and dislikes... the teens tend to like more extreme rides, and hip-hop or punk music, so you can, to an extent, customise the appeal of your rides by what music you have them playing."

So much for the little computer people. What about us? Frontier also recognise that different gamers have different wishes. "There are definitely two ways of playing *RT3*: playing the game, and playing *with* it. The scenarios comprise set objectives through which you can 'win'... However, there are a lot of people who will bypass these preset scenarios as they want to use the game as a plaything or creative tool."

THE PITCH

Build a fantastical theme park. Plot every nauseating buck of the coasters. Then ride 'em. In 3D.

ON THE DISC More *RT3* screenshots > Galleries. Remember: discs are *not* coasters.

Of course, some of us just want to fling hapless customers into oblivion. But whatever our desires, it looks like *RT3* will fulfill them.

ROSS ATHERTON

README

Publisher Atari
Developer Frontier Developments
Link www.frontier.co.uk
Building theme parks has never looked so good or had such realistic punters.

THE MECHANIC

The themes you can apply to your park – Generic, Western, Sci-Fi, Space and Adventure – extend through the game, even to staff uniforms. We're looking forward to seeing the space-themed mechanic. Will he have a laser-spanner?

THE FAMILY

Some visitors will arrive in families, gaggles of friends and tour parties. These groups will interact and sometimes split up, so you'll see terrified mothers taking children on a coaster while Dad sneaks off for a burger.

THE CROWDS

It's not just about the coasters. Frontier are pushing boundaries in terms of crowd dynamics too, as Jonny Watts explains: "Our current 'world record' is 22,000 guests in a park at once, all of whom look and behave differently, running their own AI scripts and animations, including facial expressions."

YOU ARE HERE
Stormwind can seem overwhelming to the first-time visitor. There's so much to see, so many people running around on errands. Thankfully, small details, such as these signs, help breed familiarity and turn the place into a second home.

BANNER
These banners mark the entrance to the Mages Quarter, with its shops and services. Make sure to check out the Slaughtered Lamb, where, in a back room, you can find Warlock trainers.

Stroll through another world...

RELEASE SPRING

World Of Warcraft

THE PITCH
All the Warcraft characters and orc vs human struggles transplanted to a new MMOG world

No game we've ever played does *place* as well as *World of Warcraft*. You don't just feel you play there. You live there. Even now, as lucky beta testers crawl across virgin lands, *WoW* feels like home, and markedly superior to the current crop of MMOs. Why? Partly because the supreme *WoW* designers have given each race a capital city, a place to hang their pointy hat. For my human Warlock, home is Stormwind, an imposing castle barnacled by sprawling medieval suburbs on the east coast of Azeroth.

This is a fantasy haven, so let's take a stroll through it. Walking down cobbled streets, it's the incidental detail that catches the eye, anywhere you care to look. Stormwind guards clad in gleaming silver armour patrol the thoroughfares, always ready to offer directions to the confused. Now we're passing the river, where a party of dwarves test out their newly acquired fishing skill, watching their floats bob up and down. In the Trade Quarter, the promenade outside the bank is bustling, as players drop off the spoils of adventure. Traders advertise their wares in the chat channels, bartering off newly crafted equipment, enchantments and materials. Three silver for 20 light leather sheets? Bargain. Those chancers looking to form groups always congregate here: sitting on the fountain steps waiting for a passing party

But we have our own business to attend to. We reserve our spot at the local inn before heading out through the city gates, passing through a vast gallery of statues, busts of *Warcraft* heroes. And now, leaving Stormwind, we head out across a rough trail towards the tiny hamlet of Goldshire. I duck instinctively as a gryphon swoops out of the sky, buzzing the path on its way across the continent. We keep to the road; through the trees to the left and right we glimpse a giant spider. I could take it on alone, but I'd worry about taking damage – these foul beasts lurk in groups.

We've reached Goldshire, and the beginning of my quest. For now I must leave you behind. I have a world to explore.

TIM EDWARDS

ON THE DVD Extra *WoW*-factor screenshots in Galleries, and some moving pictures too > Movies.

README

Publisher Vivendi
Developer Blizzard
Link www.worldofwarcraft.com
The beta is progressing well. We can just *feel* *WoW* creeping towards perfection.

RODNEY

Fishing in the Stormwind canals should reward you with a few tiddlers. It's a good place to learn: you're not going to land any bloaters, but you should increase your skill. Besides, the riverbank outside the city can be a dangerous place.

SCROLLS FOR SALE

One of Stormwind's enchanter trainers is just through this door. Enchants let you bless items with bonuses, increasing your stats. At low levels the effects are temporary – lasting less than half an hour. Good reason then to practise, because high level enchanted items can be sold for a pretty penny.

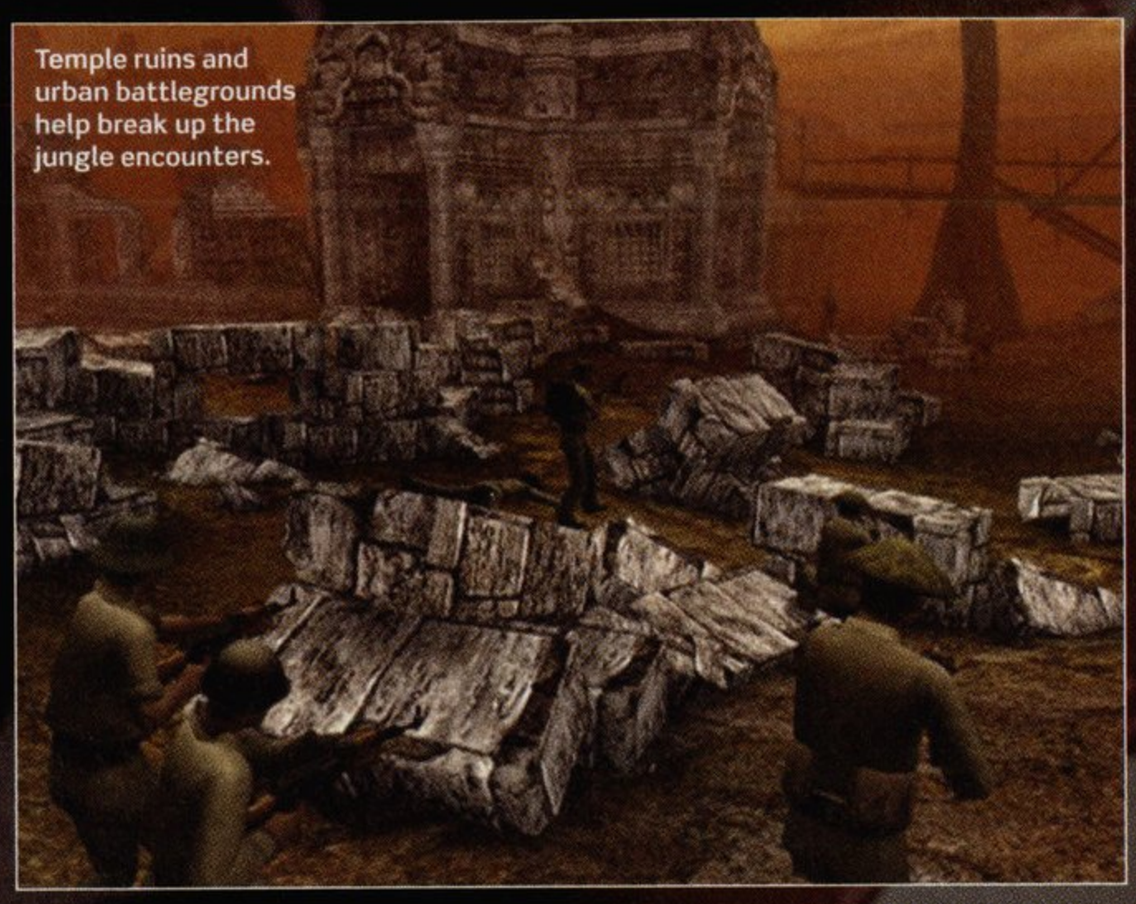
YOU'VE PLAYED TOO MUCH WOW...

... when the sun rises and sets in the game. Azeroth's day and night cycle is in real-time: a day lasts for 24 hours. It's a beautiful touch – most MMO's feel hurried because of their accelerated timeframes. Days in *Star Wars Galaxies*, for instance, last for four hours. Barely enough time for breakfast.

It's war on drugs, or is that "the war on drugs?"

Shellshock Nam '67

RELEASE SEPT-OCT



Temple ruins and urban battlegrounds help break up the jungle encounters.

The jungle may conceal enemies, but nothing hides from a blast like that.

As much as we here at PCGA love a good FPS or RTS based on a historical war like the next armchair warmonger, we'd be lying if we said we didn't expect a point of difference now in this done-do-death area of gaming. For people, being different can lead to social awkwardness and a lack of acceptance… For games it can lead to being banned.

Shellshock Nam '67 is a third-person shooter that lets the player go about their tour of duty in their own way. With graphic violence no longer really shocking anyone in a war-themed game, Guerrilla have done a bit of a *Full Metal Jacket*, looking at the grittier side of life in Vietnam. By bringing things such a recreational drug use and prostitution into the mix, Guerrilla certainly haven't introduced anything unrealistic, but at the time PCGA went to press, the OFLC had refused to classify *SN'67*.

Unless Eidos either successfully appeal or submit new code for review, this game may not see the light of day in Australia, one of the few countries that actually got involved in the Vietnam war. Ironic eh?

You don't need hard cover to survive. So long as you're unseen you're quite safe.

THE PITCH

A tour of Vietnam that doesn't skimp on the less glamorous antics the marines indulged in.

As we understand it, drug use in the game is possible, but it is not encouraged, nor in any way necessary to complete the game. The player is actually searched coming back into base, with any offending items being confiscated. Sex scenes reportedly fade to a bunny icon as well, so we're guessing that the OFLC have deemed that the drug use within the game is not suitable for a MA15+ audience. Normally only a combination of sex and violence gets a reaction from our censorship board, but now it appears drugs lone can get one too. With numerous other games referencing drugs, it's either a harsh call, or a new hard-line censorship trend to come. Once again, our neighbours in New Zealand can purchase the game as is.

> The OFLC had refused to classify *SN'67*

As for the game itself, it appears to have potential, but it's screaming out for a first-person view that we hope Eidos will slip in to the final PC version. Some of *Shellshock's* jungle skirmishes feel more like arcade-style shoot-outs than plausible battles, with an endless stream of enemies appearing if the player doesn't advance to a checkpoint.

It's not all just gunplay either, with VC traps to disarm, such as tripwire bombs, spike traps and other awful obituary makers.

We're hoping that next issue we'll be able to go into more depth with *Shellshock Nam '67* with a review, providing the game make it our of rehab… Err, classification. Otherwise it'll be a grim news report instead.

DAN TOOSE

README

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Link www.americastomostwanted.com
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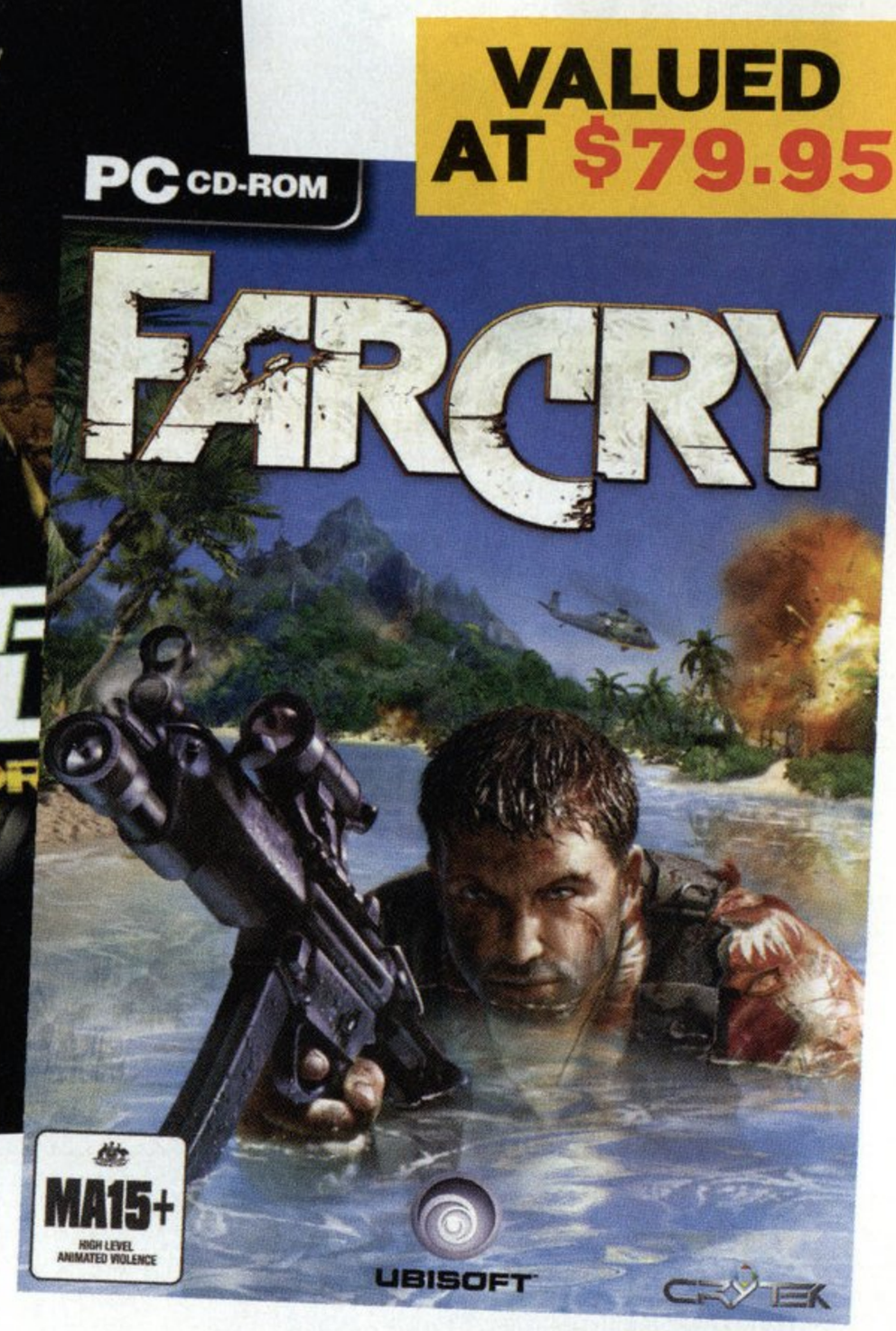

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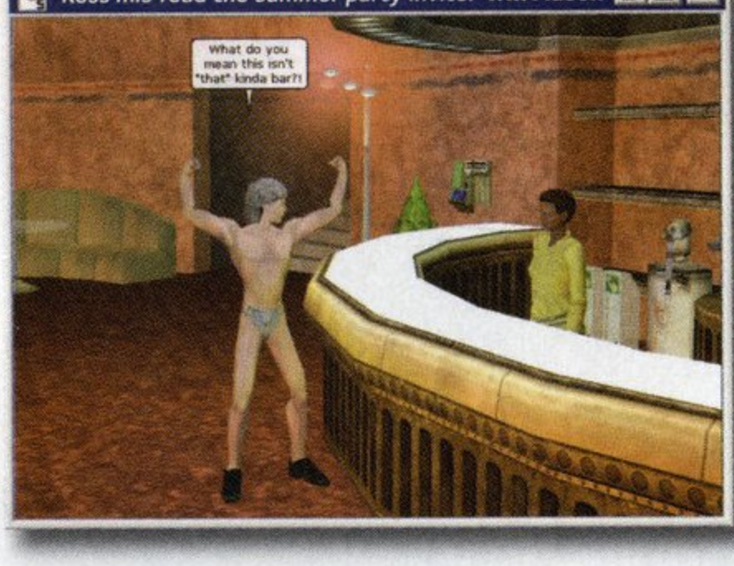
Gamer Snap

Lifting the lid on reader humour

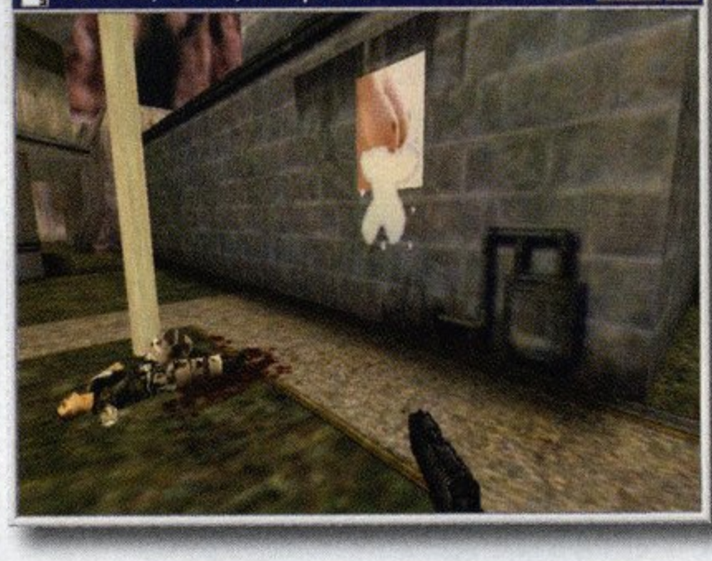
Irritable bowel syndrome eventually drove him to take his own life in elaborate fashion... **Thomas Venus**

"Has the Rear Admiral left yet?" **Jordan Appleton**

Ross mis-read the summer party invite. **Will Masek**



He came, he saw, he exploded. **Dale Silcock**



"Holy FarC'" **Craig Hynd**

"CHRIST NO MAN, THINK OF YOUR WIFE!" "I am." **Darryl Reubens**

"There are funnier pics than this on my server!" **Harry Dickinson**

In the recycle bin this month, as voted by Art...
"Harry, your sophisticated sexual wit is blunted slightly by the mis-spelling of 'homosexual', which rather deflects the laughter away from our gay chums and back onto your ignorance. Shame on you."

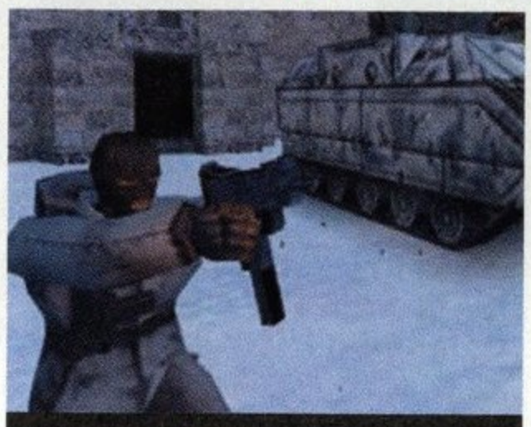
CREATIVE

Need a capture program? Use IrfanView on the cover disc! Then send your snap & caption combo to **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au** with "SNAP" as the subject. Funniest entry each month wins an excellent set of **Creative T770 speakers**!

Uncensored

Well OK, we do censor the naughty words

COUNTER-STRIKE 1.6
Reviewed by Jim Rhodes
PCGA 21, Score 75%



Perfect, or perfectly ghastly?

It appears as though the Steam network, which was sold on the premise of being a big pipe of happiness for all of Valve's children to suckle on, is a victim of its own immediacy.

By this, I mean that the developers have been unable to resist the urge to tweak game mechanics on a regular and ill-thought-out basis. Recently, there's been a furore over the AWP, after Valve added a time delay to its draw, effectively preventing players from quickly switching between sniper-rifle and pistol. An online petition claiming this was an "effective removal of the AWP from the game" was signed by over 20,000 people. The changes were symptomatic of the knee-jerk 'nerfing' mentality that runs rampant through online games.

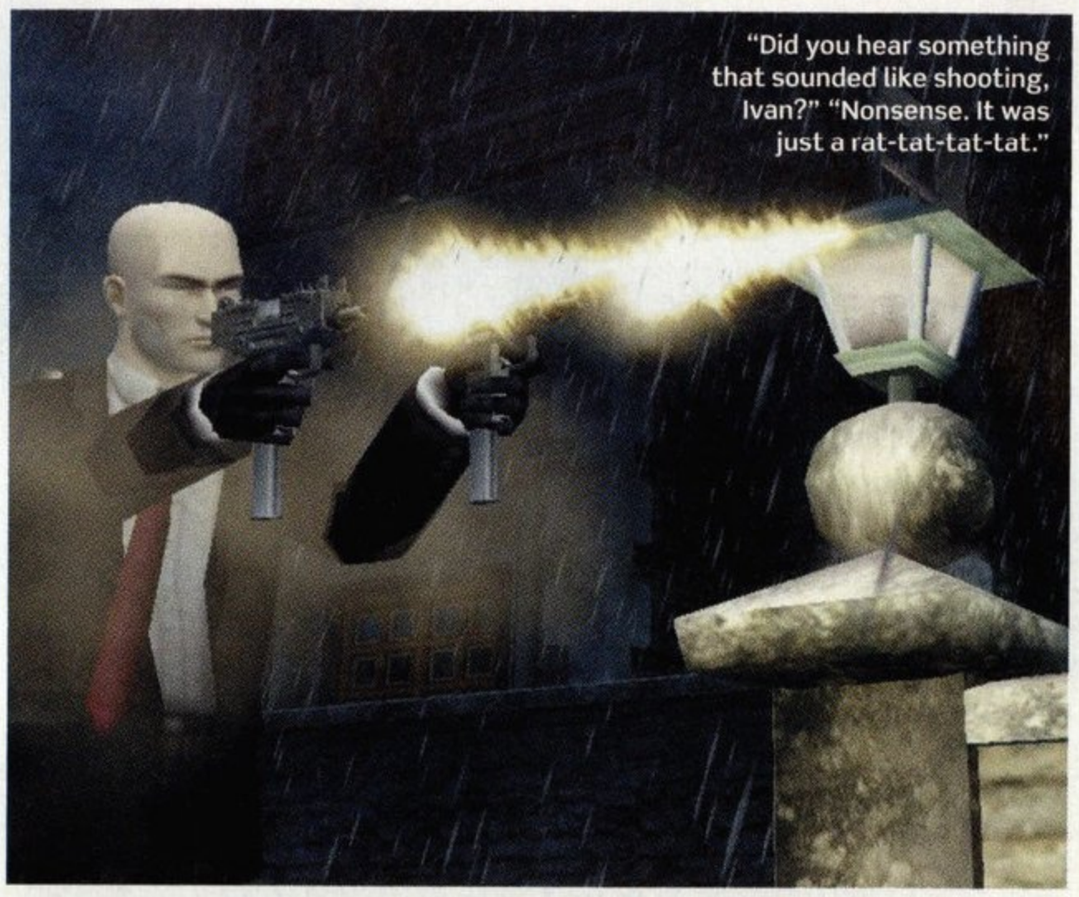
In my opinion, *Counter-Strike* is as good now as it ever will be, given the limitations of the now-ancient engine. It can't evolve much more – it's practically perfect. As such, why not make it like football, or cricket, or any other regular sport? For heaven's sake, don't go playing with perfection: even the sweetest milk will spoil if over-cooked.

Jim's Rating 90%

PCGA *responds: An argument waiting to happen: is* Counter-Strike *perfect, near-perfect, or past perfection and heading downhill?*

READER REVIEW OF THE MONTH

HITMAN: CONTRACTS
Reviewed by Owain Bevan
PCGA 23, Score 75%



"Did you hear something that sounded like shooting, Ivan?" "Nonsense. It was just a rat-tat-tat-tat."

Life is a non-linear, freeform game – yet we are bound by rules, circumstances and morals that sometimes force us to do things the hard way. For a game like *Contracts* to pride itself on its open-ended choice, it too must incorporate appropriate repercussions for the actions taken by the player.

I tried to do it the way the developers intended, but quickly tired of being rumbled by the guards (for reasons that were not always apparent) and so *Contracts* turned into a mediocre shooter.

This is the main flaw of the game. There are no real rewards for killing cleanly and quietly – and no real punishments for turning each mission into a bloodbath. Why bother sneaking about, fiddling with gadgets and cheese-wire when you can kick-in the front door and shoot anything that moves?

Until Io Interactive learn to slap Agent 47's wrists when he gets sloppy (or give him a pat on the back when he does a textbook job), this series will always be an also-ran.

Owain's Rating 70%

PCGA *responds: Spot on, Owain. Satisfaction relies on the game caring about how well you play.*

PERIMETER
Reviewed by Jonathan Birch
PCGA 23, Score 90%

At long last, the whole, stagnant RTS genre gets a kick up the back-side. Accepting that *Warcraft III* can't be beaten at the old resource-gathering, unit-massing game, *Perimeter* delivers something unique. Static defence is the new moving attack, and managing the impenetrable but energy-draining *Perimeter* shield is a tall order. Terraforming is as beautiful as it is vital.

Perimeter delivers something unique

The flaws are all fairly minor. Be aware the graphics are demanding even on a powerful system, and that it's unpleasant to play such a complex game when it's chugging. Offline skirmishes are diminished on small maps by the possibility of an early howitzer bombardment, but online battling faces something worse: no-one wants to buy this game. If you want to miss out on the most innovative game of the year, do so at your own peril.

Jonathan's Rating 91%

Perimeter has been sadly marginalised.

PCGA *responds: We like the bit when you burrow out from underneath your opponent's base, morph into a helicopter, and let rip with tonnes of bomblets. It's a work of near genius.*

Of course its biggest merit is the simple fact it doesn't feel like 'yet another' RTS we already seen.

JNC

The reader review of the month wins an awesome portable **JNC SSF-31 MP3 Player**!
Send your words to **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au** with "UNCENSORED" as the subject, along with your contact details. Reviews **must** be 120-200 words so we can print them!

YOUR CHANCE

WIN An ASUS ATI Ax800XT Video card!

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In this month's hardware section you'll be hard pressed to miss our review of the Asus ATI AX800XT. With it's superior texture compression and low heat output, it's not just ATI's answer to the nVidia FX6800, in our opinion it's the best video card you can currently buy.

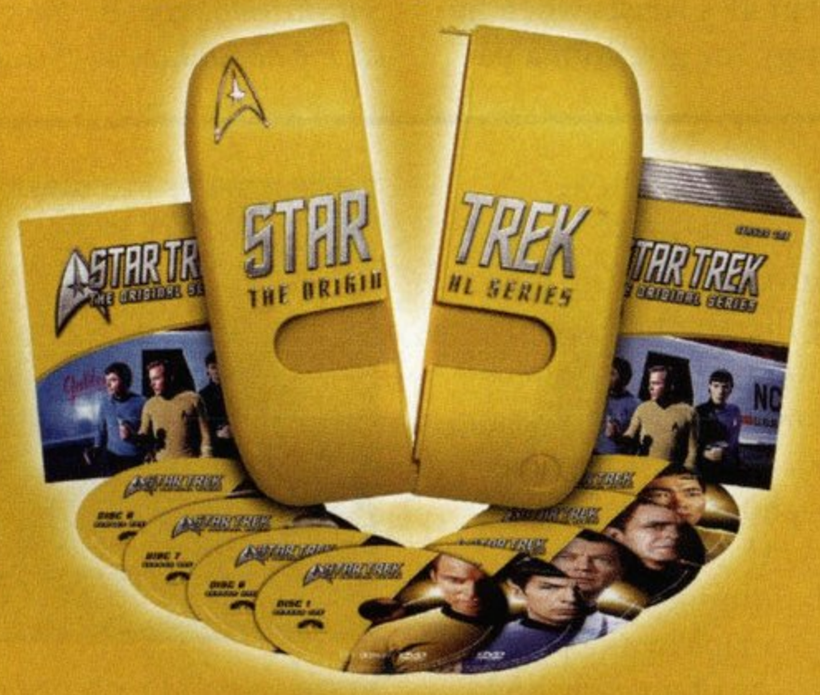
Even though it's worth the $899 price tag, not everyone can afford the best, so our friends at Asus have handed us one of their shiny new AX800XT cards to give away to one lucky PCGA reader!

All you need to do to be in the winning for this awesome prize is use your hardware nouse to answer the following question: In 100 words or less, explain the AX800XT's best features. Best answer wins, so study your tech!

Entry details are at the bottom of the page - Email subject "XT for me!"

WIN A Star Trek DVD Collection

It's logic that you want it...



Last month Paramount offered you a chance to pick up the latest *Star Trek Voyager* series. This issue we're going retro, going back to the days where James T. Kirk boldly hit on alien species no man had encountered before.

To be in the running to win one of four *Star Trek* DVD series, answer the following question: Who played Mr Sulu in the original *Star Trek* series?

Entry details below - With the email subject of "He's dead Jim".

WIN Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War

Be the first to hit the front lines!

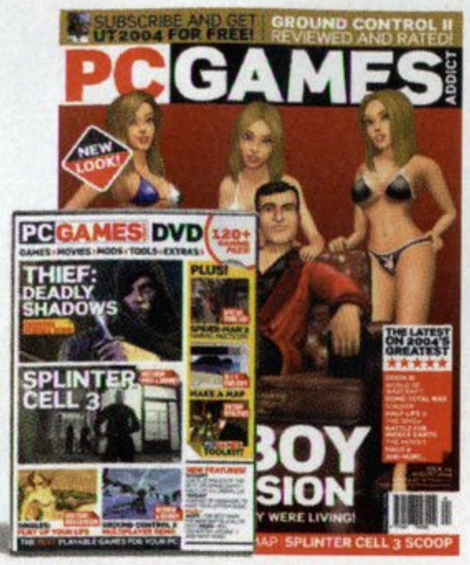
5 COPIES TO BE WON!

This month's cover game should be one of this year's best strategy games, and this is your big chance to ensure you'll be taking on the Chaos Legions the moment the war breaks. Our generous friends at THQ are giving you the opportunity to secure yourself one of the first copies of *Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War* in the country!

To be in the running to become one of the chosen few, answer this simple question: What are the four major warring races in *Warhammer 40,000*?

Entry details for this comp included below - Just be sure to set your subject to "For the Emperor!"

To ensure your competition entry is valid, just email your submission to **PCGA@derwenthoward.com.au** being sure to use the subject as detailed at the end of the prizes descriptions above. No entries accepted after 14/9/04, one entry per person only...You spam, you banned! Finally, include your full name, age, postal addres and phone number, lest you prove too hard to contact. Start winning now!



Cables

Illustrations by **David Lyttleton**

Featuring: Cricket, violence, and social issues...

SHORTS

What the hell is up with the 'Football' obsession there at PCGA? It's 'Soccer', and it's a puncey sport that nobody here cares about. Give it a rest would you?

F. Marsh, via email

If you must know, several members of staff here actually play football (It was the first sport to be called football, and thus the ONLY one that should be), and we're not about to pretend that we don't think it's the best sport on Earth. Well, a close behind E-Sports of course. **PCGA**

Is there any reason you people aren't reviewing movies or anime? Everybody I know into gaming is into one or both, so why not cover them in your glorious magazine?

Aaron Lucas, NSW

We can see where you're coming from, especially with PCs now being easy to turn into a home cinema setup, However, while several of us are movie buffs here at PCGA (two of us write in movie/DVD magazines), we are a PC gaming magazine and it's we feel it's fair to say people don't buy our magazine for info on movies or Anime. We have more ideas for new gaming content you're likely to see here before you'll see a movies page. Sound fair? **PCGA**

Stop the violence!

Violence in computer games is becoming more of a problem every day. It has been linked to aggressive behaviour as well as criminal and violent acts. More and more people are noticing this is a problem that needs fixing

Is it necessary? One of the most popular games of all time is *Super Mario Bros* which makes no use of violence at all.

What I am asking for is some points which make violence necessary, or a good thing in games

J. Wood, WA

Violence is NOT a necessary element to create a good game, but nor does violent content make a game bad.

We feel that the problem that needs fixing is how the general public seems incapable of reaslising that like any form of entertainment, video games don't cause *people to commit acts of violence, they simply provide a* focus *that means something to a mentally unstable person who IS capable of such an act.*

It's high time for parents to take responsibility for the entertainment their children are exposed to, as well as their ability to distinguish between reality and make believe. Happy, well-adjusted people do not become killers or criminals overnight. **PCGA**

Better graphics, but inferior games...

I'm quite convinced that computer and video games are no longer the wonderful, imaginative things I once loved. Am I alone in feeling that the developers have forsaken me?

Now in my early thirties, I'm part of the generation that grew up with video games, and even though when I look at the mind-blowing improvements that have been made to graphics, I still feel that games have devolved.

Despite all that visceral punch that comes with all these new games like *Call of Duty*, *Ground Control II* and the upcoming *Doom 3*, they just don't excite me like I feel they should.

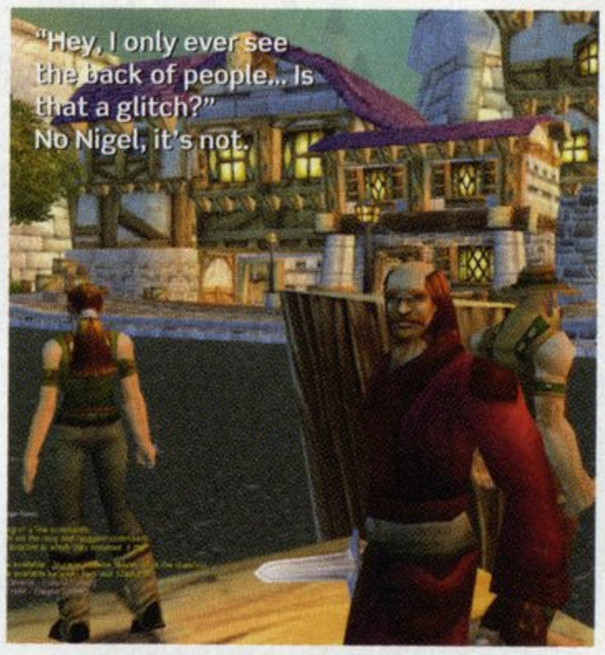
So, have I grown out of gaming? Or has gaming not grown up with me? Have graphics replaced gameplay and longevity? Or has gaming become such an addiction that I need a greater and greater 'hit' to be able to achieve the same pleasure as before? Please give me hope for the future!

Marcus Van der Sar, via email

Actually, we're quite certain games are now deeper and more involved than ever before. Remember how the music your parents loved that was cutting edge in their day always seemed so lame and uncool? Gaming is no different.

Regardless what form of entertainment you're into, if you expect to have it give you increasingly more profound experiences every time, you'll always be disappointed. **PCGA**

LETTER OF THE MONTH



Anti-social slaughter...

I'm starting to wonder just how much I have in common with my fellow gamers.

When I started getting into MMORPGs I was under the impression that I was getting into one of the most sociable breed of computer games ever to see the light of day. A recent experience in Everquest has had me questioning just how sociable these games really are.

After spending several days in a row adventuring with some guy from America, including numerous scrapes where we'd saved each other's necks, as well as talked about our real lives, something happened recently that left me feeling rather dissed.

I'd been soloing, and was simply resting when my 'companion' came by and we started chatting. Mid way through me telling him something rather personal, he jumped up, announced some area had respawned and promptly ran off, abandonding my tale for some XP.

Is it just me, or are MMORPG gamers not quite as sociable as you'd expect from a game that involves interacting with others. I feel like I've been wasting my time.

Cut Gamer, NSW

Try not to let one cruddy pseudo-buddy get to you CG, but keep in mind that an MMORPG is really a big number crunching game. If you want truly social gaming, LAN parties are probably more your bag. **PCGA**

ATARI

The best letter of the month wins a bundle of great games from Atari's 'Heroes' range. Send your rants, raves and reactions to **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au** with "CABLES" as the subject. Long or vulgar letters may be edited to fit or toned down accordingly...

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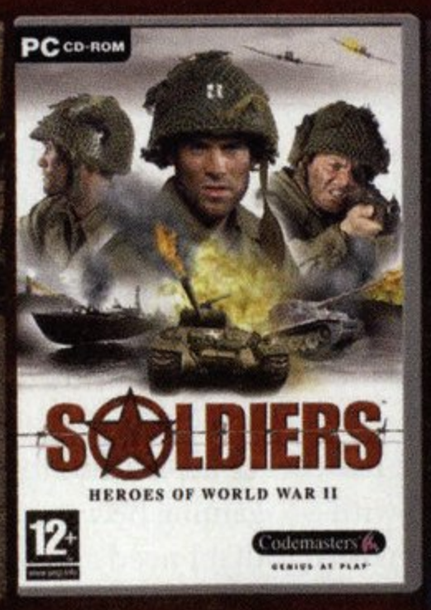

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PC GAMES ADDICT

REVIEWS

In which we put the new releases before our panel of PC gaming experts

Doom & Gloom

It's like the other PC games were scared to come out.

It's been how many years now? *Doom 3* has been on everybody's radar for what seems like an absolute eternity now, and when it became apparent that we were actually going to have the game arrive in time for this issue, there was much pinching-of-the-self in the PCGA towers. No, it wasn't a dream, and it actually spared us from a nightmare… A month with no major releases.

Of course, games don't need to be hyped to death to be worthy of your time and attention, it's just that the games that fall into that catagory this month are clearly niche interest titles.

As much as most people know how to play Chess, how many are actually on the lookout for a new computer Chess game? If you've ever wanted to take the plunge, now is the time - Chessmaster 10th Edition offers an excellent suite that caters to players of all levels. Perfect for both serious strategists and fans of *Battle Chess* alike.

Micro Machines is a name that almost all gamers say with an air of fondness, but it's also usually a retrospective fondness. *Mashed* is a contemporary chapter in the world of minature racing worth looking up.

There's *World Championship Snooker 2004*, which although still not quite as sociable as an actual game of stick at the pub, is so chock full of official content, options and online features that it gives the drinking hole a run for its money on a rainy day.

Finally. we also spent some time with import MMORPG *Lineage II*, to report on the game that sees millions inhabiting its servers. Millions - scary.

But enough preamble, turn over to discover our verdict on the big one…

DAN TOOSE
EDITOR

Scrutinised this issue...

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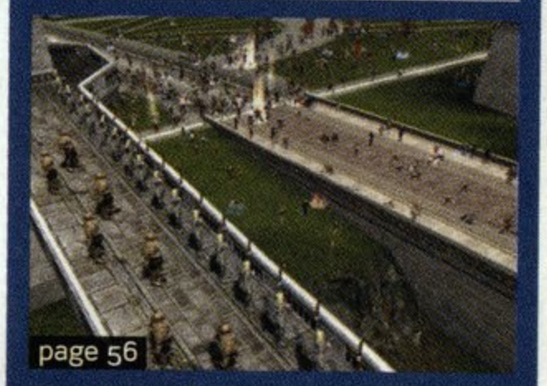
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The PCGA review rig

There's no point reviewing new games on old PCs, otherwise we wouldn't be doing them justice. After all, how can you tell how well a game runs until you've seen it on the best machine available?

That's why we've turned to Emagen. Not just because they're able to keep working with an up to date PC to put the games through their paces, but also due to the fact that we're certain that they do the best system assembly in the business. Look at the picture below and you won't find a stray ATA cable or screw out of place. If you're serious about assembling the best machine you can, you'd do well to contact Emagen.

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- Corsair TWINX 512MB PC3200
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- 19" Mitsubishi Flat CRT Monitor
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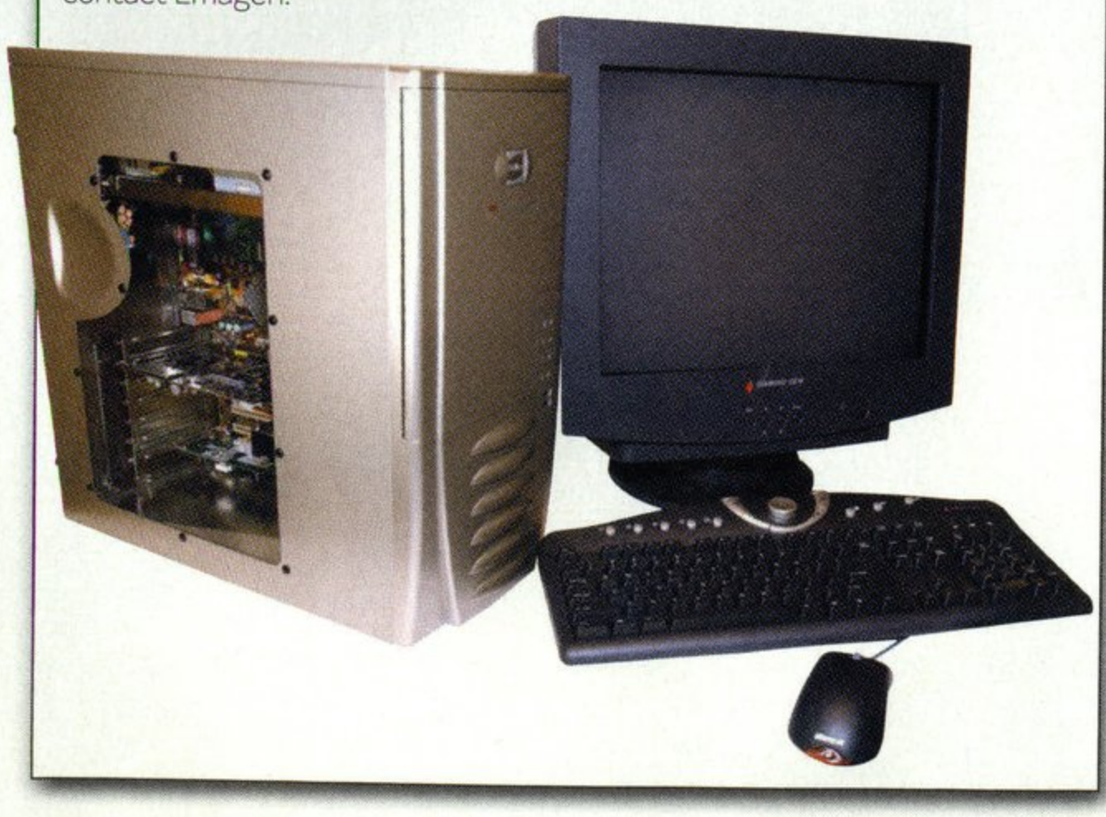


Our Scoring System Explained

0-19% ABOMINABLE
Game crime. If you see this game do not approach. Call the appropriate authorities and have it removed.

20-49% POOR
A deeply troubled and troubling effort. Think twice, even if you find it lurking in the bargain bin.

50-69% MEDIOCRE
Fans of the theme or genre can extract limited fun if they persevere. Otherwise, put your wallet away.

70-84% GOOD
Consistently enjoyable but lacks that spark of genius. Superior alternatives are usually available.

85-89% EXCELLENT
A first-class title that guarantees great gaming. Fans of the genre will revel in it.

90%+ EXCEPTIONAL
Instant classic. These games are worth trying even if you don't normally like the genre.

THE PCGA AWARD

Just as our scoring system implies, if it gets 85% or higher, it's a game worthy of your hard earned dollar. Our **GOLD GAME** award will help you spot games **PCGA** recommend.

PC GAMES! GOLD GAME ★★★★★

RIGHT TO REPLY

Think we've treated a game unfairly? Or perhaps we've gone too easy on a game. Address your redress to **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au** or write to us via snail mail by sending your correspondence to **Feedback, PC Games Addict, Derwent Howard, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355**

Review

DOOM III

Has the company that redefined PC gaming done it all over again... yet again?

For me, this is somewhat of a career milestone, as I finally get to review a new installment to the series that got me into PC gaming in the first place. Back in December '93 I was a rather content Amiga 2000HD owner that only vaguely wanted a PC to get my hands on *Ultima* and *Wing Commander* games, *Doom* was the game that compelled me to commit the cash to acquire a shiny new 486-DX4-100.

Now, after having met and interviewed numerous id Software folk and reviewed (and at one point, lived for) the *Quake* games, having the chance to pass a verdict on *Doom 3* was both a pleasure, and also a pain. They've never really let myself nor any other gamer who isn't just complaining about it for the sake of appearing 'hardcore' (in this case, that means 'Doesn't game for fun').

Let's push hype aside and look at *Doom 3* for what it is – The original *Doom* scenario involving research labs on Mars, demons, teleporters and much carnage, brought to life with a brand new 3D engine so life-like that it's genuinely scary. For those too new to PC gaming to know, and the rest of you that simply want a briefing before joining the marines, here's the grim situation confronting those that tackle this sci-fi horror experience.

> Got me into PC gaming in the first place

It's 2741 AD, mankind has already escaped Earth's confines, establishing bases on the red planet. You're a marine who has been transferred to the Union Aerospace Corporation's Mars research facility. Even though life on this remote Martian station comes with its risks, it soon becomes evident that some strange things are going on, and some members of the UAC clearly know more about what's going on than everyone else, although it eventually becomes clear nobody quite foresaw this tragic tale coming in time.

This high-tech installation boasts a styling something akin to that of the *Alien* movies, with a blend of sterile hi-tech decor and dark, niche-ridden maintenance tunnels that simply scream "Ambush from the Abyss!"

Reckless experimentation into Martian artefacts to unlock the secrets of teleportation lead to a dimensional breach that is literally letting all Hell loose on Mars. Faced with the prospect of the entire facility being overrun by possessed comrades and grotesque abominations, as well as the threat of a reactor meltdown or losing contact with

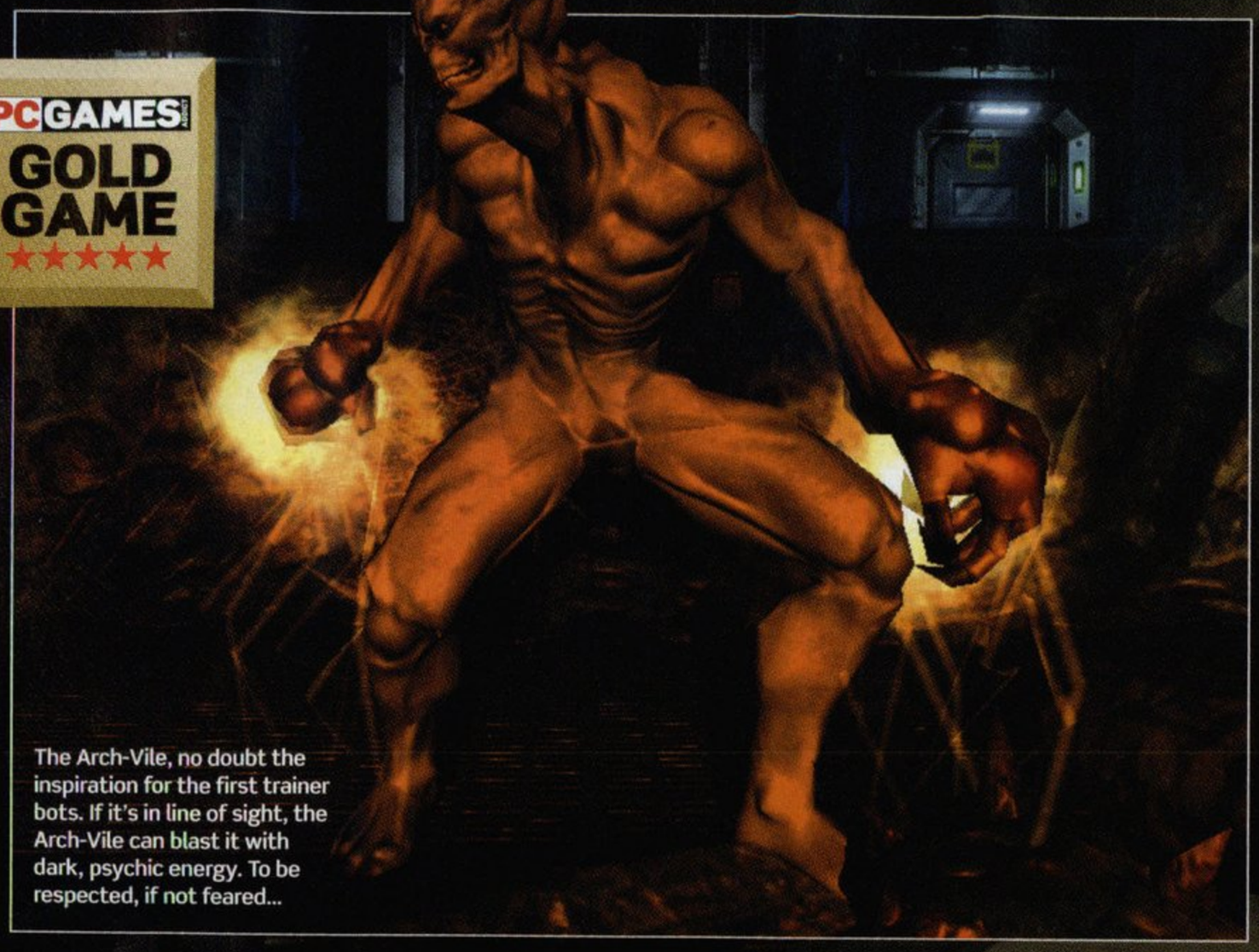
Thumbnail Review

***Doom* for the GeForce Generation is here! Ready or not, you'll...**

- ☑ See much blood
- ☑ Kill many things
- ☑ Actually get scared playing a game
- ☒ Want for more

Ignoring all the current conventions of first person shooters, Id simply continue to do it their way, setting new standards in video game atmosphere.

PC GAMES GOLD GAME ★★★★★



The Arch-Vile, no doubt the inspiration for the first trainer bots. If it's in line of sight, the Arch-Vile can blast it with dark, psychic energy. To be respected, if not feared...

Not even Hellspawn are safe from dodgy scientific experiments

Earth, this is a run-and-gun fight for survival that is arguably the scariest game ever created. It's not the hideous demons, the act of gunning down comrades-turned-zombie or the strange things you see that make it so frightening. Ironically for a game that sets new visual standards, it's what the dark doesn't let you see that makes *Doom 3* the most intense game around.

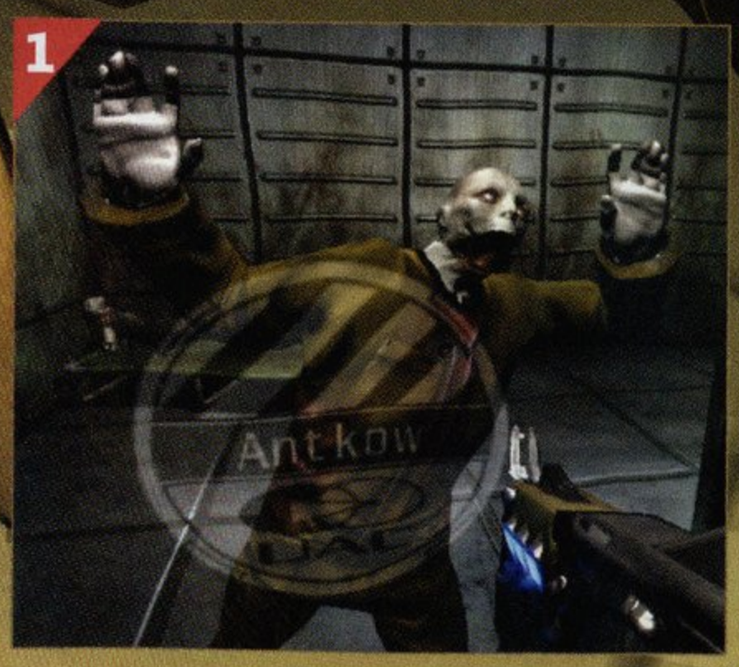
But I'm getting ahead of myself here, as I need to spit bring up the one thing about *Doom 3* that's somehow both stunningly polished and clearly lacking all at once – the presentation of the adventure. By this I don't mean aesthetic qualities, but the structure of what the player does, and the story they interact with.

Aside from the long loading times between levels, *Doom 3* offers the same sort of seamless story that *Half-Life* gave us years ago, complete with a general goal, and an ongoing plot. To get the criticism out of the way, let it just be said that *Doom 3's* story is nowhere near as deep or surprising as the aforementioned *Half-Life* or a game like *Deus Ex*. *Doom* was always about the action, not the lump of text at the end of every ten levels that explained a new texture set, and while this story is told in a memorable way, the tale itself packs none of the surprise or tension that the action does. ▶

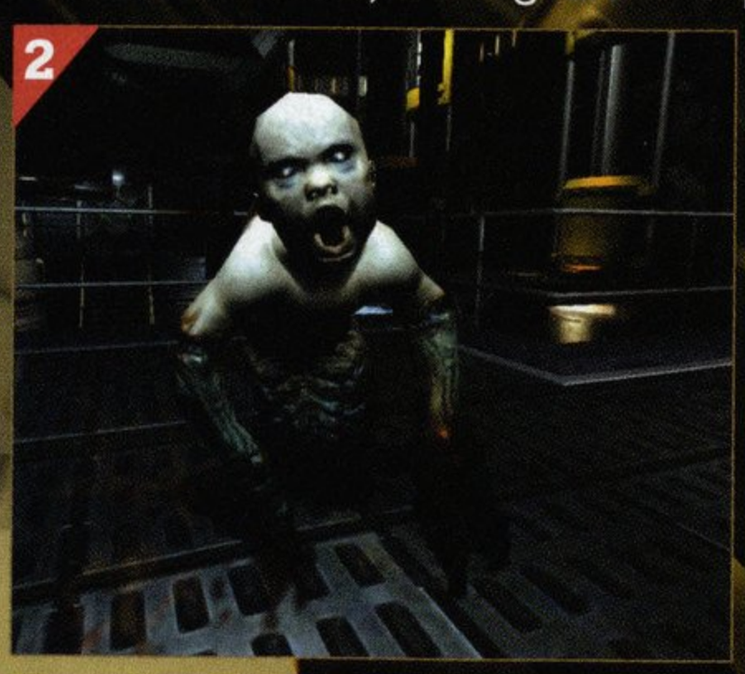
CREATURE FEATURE

The new gibs on the block...

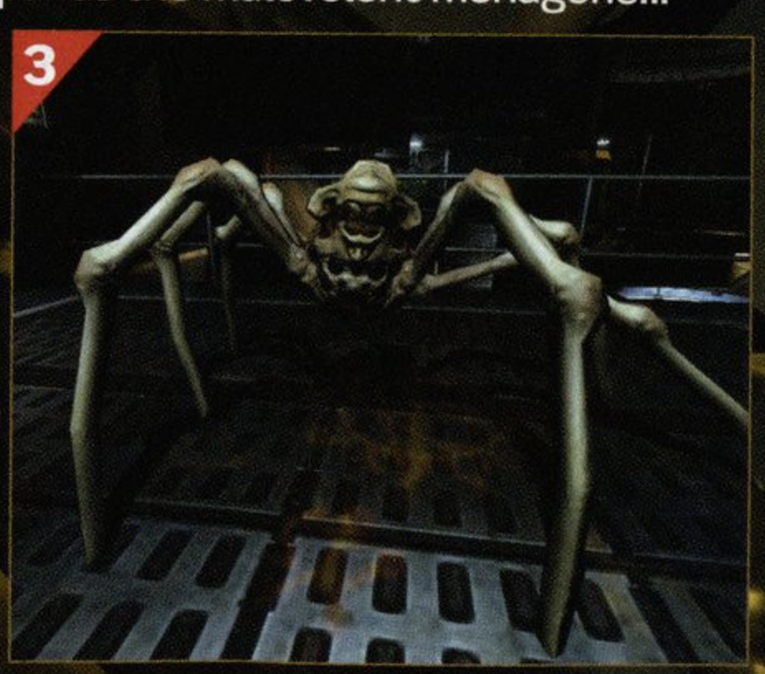
Just as Doom II added a horde of new monsters to the mix, Doom 3 further expands the malevolent menagerie...



ZOMBIE These ex-humans are classic shuffling brain-eaters. They're slow and vulnerable to an accurate shotgun blast, but have a nasty habit of lurking where you least expect them.

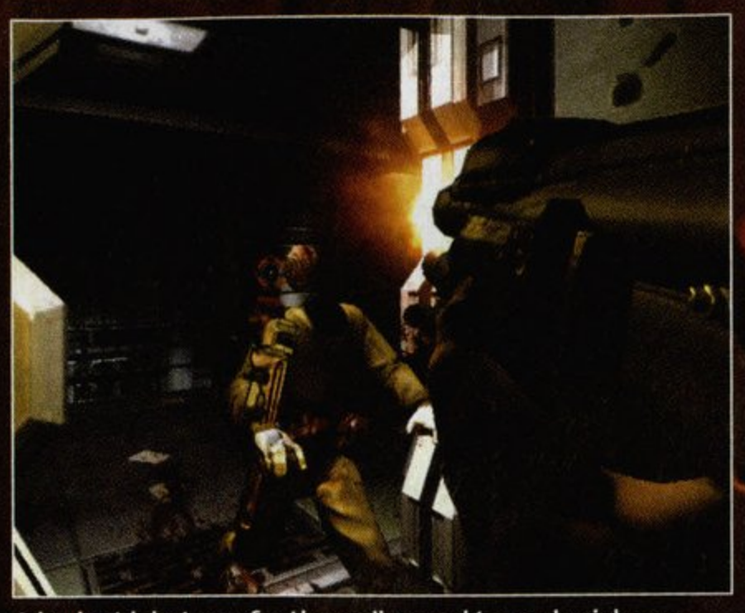


CHERUB Now this is just wrong. These half-baby, half-insect aberrations can almost fly, leaping up to scratch your eyes out, jumping to avoid your fire and attacking in groups.

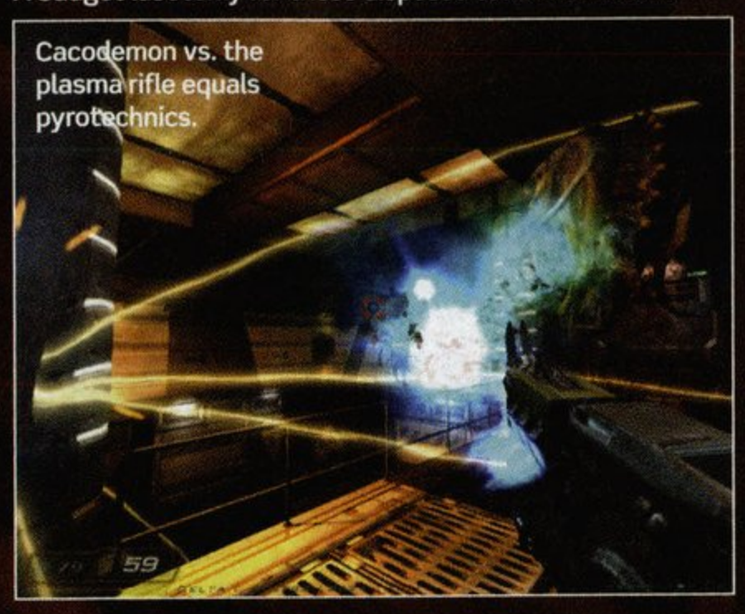


TRITE There's nothing hackneyed about these skittering nightmares, which often squeeze out, one after another, from hatches or vents. They're easily taken out with a few bullets.

DOOM III



A budget labotomy for those disposed towards violence.



Cacodemon vs. the plasma rifle equals pyrotechnics.

The hulking Hellknight doesn't need to prove he can throw his weight around... He just throws weights around.

Fortunately, what *Doom 3* lacks in depth of plot, it more than makes up for in terms of turning something traditionally implausable into something uniquely convincing.

During the player's first routine mission under their new commanding officer the UAC facility is rocked by a shockwave that turns almost all of its human inhabitants into zombies, with demons invading shortly afterwards. Receiving basic objectives from the Sarge via radio, our dauntless marine weaves his way through a labyrinth of niche-infested tunnels and rooms that are often dark enough to hide anything that may lurk within.

This is where *Doom 3* is different to most FPS games, in that it doesn't rely on confusing and overwhelming the player with numerous opponents, but rather, the prospect of being suddenly set upon by an unseen assailant. A torch can pierce the darkness to reveal what hides within, but you can't hold it and a gun out at once, and it's not just visibility issues making things tricky.

The sometimes messy corridors and rooms of the UAC facility generally don't leave much room to manouevre, and some of the forces of Hell are fast and agile enough to be a menace at close quarters. Those that aren't so fast all have tremendous power, and the result is that every monster the player meets in *Doom 3* is dangerous enough for them to have to take it seriously. Even the lowly Imp, which was once upon a time the cannon fodder of the first *Doom* games is now an enemy that demands the player's full attention. They can run along walls, spring through the air at lightning speed, and of course hurl fireballs from a distance.

The forces of hell are fast and agile

Some might deem the use of cramped spaces to create challenge a design cop-out, but it doesn't change the fact that this ever-present sense of claustrophobia, vulnerability and discomfort is what makes the *Doom 3* experience so profound.

We're not really telling you anything you don't know by announcing that a large part of the reason that *Doom 3* does have such a distinct flavour is that the new engine makes everything look and feel more realistic than any other game out there. Period. The obvious step forward lies in Carmack's (JC to old-school FPS folk) ▶

TAKEN APART

"Damage the Dalton... Doom-style"

LIGHT WORK Multiple light sources cast accurate shadows from every in-game object: itís hugely impressive technology and hard to find fault. Still, after the first hour of cooing, youíll start to take it for granted.

BOG STANDARD Itís a design rule: first-person shooters have to include toilets. But even these space-age thrones demonstrate the attention to detail that informs every room, passage and item: extra-sturdy design to cater for the larger marine, perhaps?

ROB ZOMBIE While every living human has a different appearance, weíre sadly limited to a few zombie types. Ive given them names; feel free to do so yourself. But donít get too close to them, as itíll only hurt when you have to put them down.

PHYSICS LESSON While most objects that should be moveable are, their behaviour isnít quite as convincing as, say, the lighting. Still, kicking bins and boxes around rooms is always a nice distraction.

A BIT OF CLARET Ah, the ubiquitous gore. Follow trails of it, skip over puddles of it, encourage its release from zombies and monsters alike... above all, get used to it.

CARRYING A TORCH Terrifyingly, you canít hold the torch and a weapon at the same time. At first itís frustrating, but youíll soon feel the fear and claustrophobia this restriction creates.

MARINE MAYHEM

Anyone up for some hot four-way man on man action?

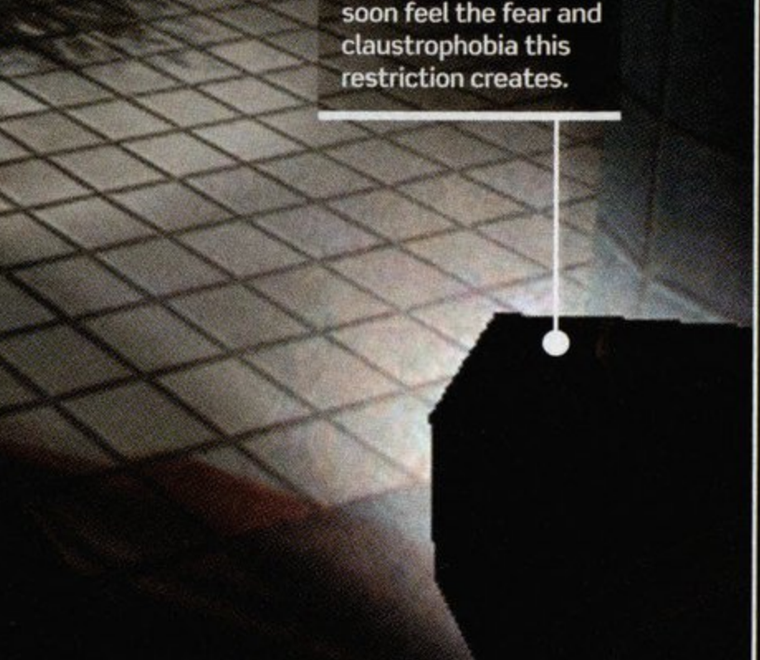
Multiplayer isn't Doom 3's focus, but it's present, correct, and very smooth indeed... But only for a fistful of players.

Five maps, four game types and only four players isn't most people's idea of a modern multiplayer shooter. To be fair, Doom 3 was never touted as a multiplayer game, so who's complaining? Admittedly, we don't get the Xbox version's promised co-operative mode (though I can't see how that will work effectively), but plain old four-man Deathmatch is rather good fun. The Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Last Man Standing and Tourney modes are a blast back to the days of Quake's small maps, fast rocket-launcher and camping spots. The five maps are solid if unspectacular but perhaps of most interest on this topic is the main menu option marked "Mods". It's currently empty, but I don't expect it to stay that way for long. Expect Doom 3 versions of popular game types, and designers to push the limits of Doomís mighty engine.

2

None of the included five maps feature very large areas, but each is as carefully designed as the singleplayer areas.

3



As you can see, I 'own', which is more a reflection on the talents of my opponents than my own '5k111z'.

DOOM III

The 'Maggot' is another new inhabitant of Hell, that creeps through shadows stealthily and speedily.

foresight to create an engine that was made to adopt all the latest pixel shaders and special texture qualities that produce something that looks correct in context, regardless where the light is coming from. Id have been intentionally mean with the brightly lit areas, and injected a dash of colour into most weapon effects so it can illuminate the unseen with a soft yet full hue. It's not just a simple case of coarse rock being pitted with shadows or metal panelling producing a lustrous sheen. More complex things happen without a hitch, such as blood spraying onto walls in a way that matches the impact that occurred. Use your trusty shotgun (boomstick) to shred a foe next to a wall and the claret will be smeared in a spot right behind the exit wound.

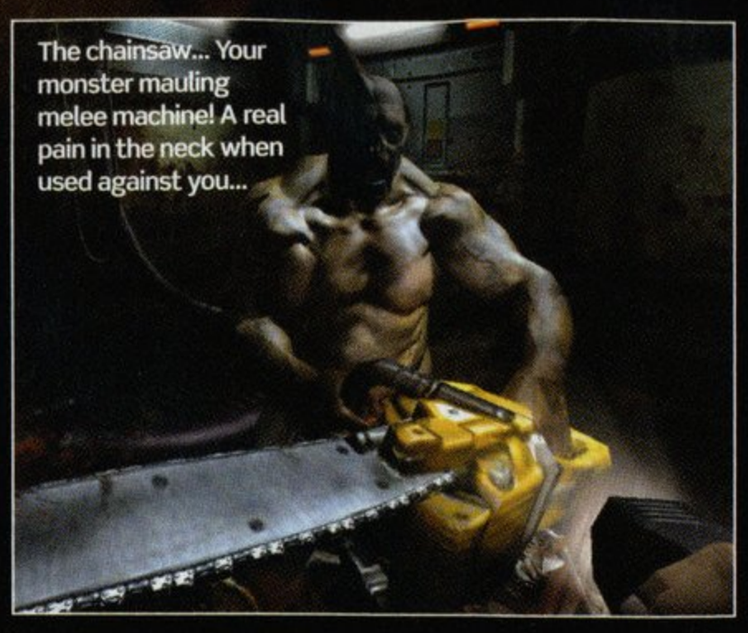
Then there's the animation, which is fluid as you like with fellow humans lip-syncing nicely and demons oozing murderous Machivelian intent. Sure, try to push a system too far and a frame rate hit ensues, but *Doom 3* won't leave anybody feeling like the impossible happened to allow a creature or loose object to get where it was going. There's simply no clipping to be seen, even when it comes to digits wrapping around objects. Finally, top all this solid-surface precision with ragdoll physics that makes bodies look like they've gone limp rather than turned to rubber.

All this stunning eye-candy may be the most immediately impressive feature of the presentation, but the mix of eerie moaning, breathing, shuffling and strange noises that betray the presence of something dangerous are a major part of the illusion. If the sudden ear-piercing cry of a demon attacking from out of nowhere doesn't spook you, the stretches of silence will help keep you on edge. Complete silence is rare though, with a solid bass rumble giving a tactile sense that ultra-powerful machinery is purring away unerringly… Somewhere.

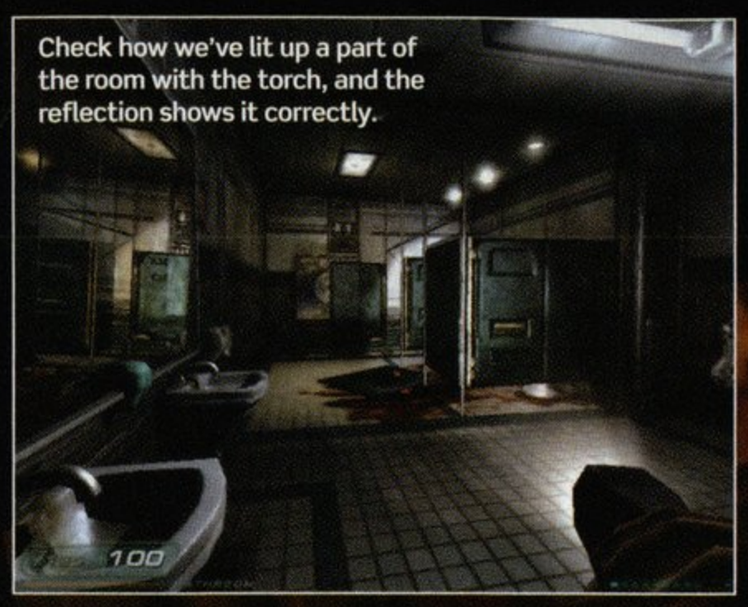
About the only off notes in this tune at all are the speech samples. The timbre in the voices of the minds and souls that are clearly twisted work a treat, but most of the human dialogue the player hears is in voice recordings left on the PDAs of ex-breathers. Hearing their theories does create a sort of backstory, but the player has already knows what all these little signs of disaster will result in because they've usually already happened. Because none of the other survivors of the moment of disaster ever say enough or even survive long enough to introduce characters. There are a couple of 'regular cast' members, but once

Just like the old-school 'Pinky' demon of '93, this unholy four-legged beast is more frightening than fatal. A few shotty shells puts this puppy to sleep

Not one of the most fearsome foes, but too quick, unpredictable, versatile and relentless to ignore for one second.



The chainsaw... Your monster mauling melee machine! A real pain in the neck when used against you...



Check how we've lit up a part of the room with the torch, and the reflection shows it correctly.

again, there's no real sense of genuine interaction.

A poor substitute for memorable companions, those PDAs are still extremely valuable due to their ability to store door code clearance codes like an electronic keychain, and finding access codes to securely locked caches of precious health, armour, weaponry and ammo. Messages keep playing back after the PDA is put away, so there's no need to stop going about exploring and battling the damned to hear someone read their obituary.

Having finished Doom 3, we can say with certainty that this is a ride wild enough to want to draw out as long as possible. We can also say it's best if we don't reveal too much more lest we spoil what magic there is. If you use the 'Sprint' button so as to dodge and weave around attacks and check blind spots habitually, the challenge will wane somewhat. For that reason, unless you suck hard at FPS games, crank the difficulty and savour the struggle.

Doom 3 may be prettier than all of the opposition, but unless id decide to do something about the four-player limit, the game will never steal an audience from the avid FPS multiplayer masses out there. It's obvious the new engine is not great with large open spaces or lots of creatures in line of sightof each other at once, and that could dictate where we see this marvel of source resurface as a licensed piece of code. If you want to do interiors, John Carmack is the man to ask about getting it right.

Doom 3 probably won't match the hype for some, but that's just the brutally unfair scenario facing a company like id that always raises the bar.

You know what's really terrifying? Mr. Carmack already has ideas about what the next step is. If horror gets any more convincing than this, there'll be cardiac arrest warnings on boxes.

DAN TOOSE

CITY LIFE

Man made marvels...

If it weren't for the demonic infestation, this place would make for an interesting tour

The Monorail, although just as susceptible to breakdowns and cancellations as CityRail, it makes for a rare peaceful trip, with a view!

Teleporters may sound like a dream come true until you read the reports of subsequent dimentia, or try it yourself.

We call them blood banks, as they store healing 'charges' that our hero can come back to as needed. They just scream "Save point!"

PC GAMES ADDICT

Redefines fear itself rather than the FPS

IT'S › Scary as hell › Stunningly pretty › About what we expected

IT'S NOT › For the fragile › Plot-heavy › A multiplayer title of note

Atmosfearic!

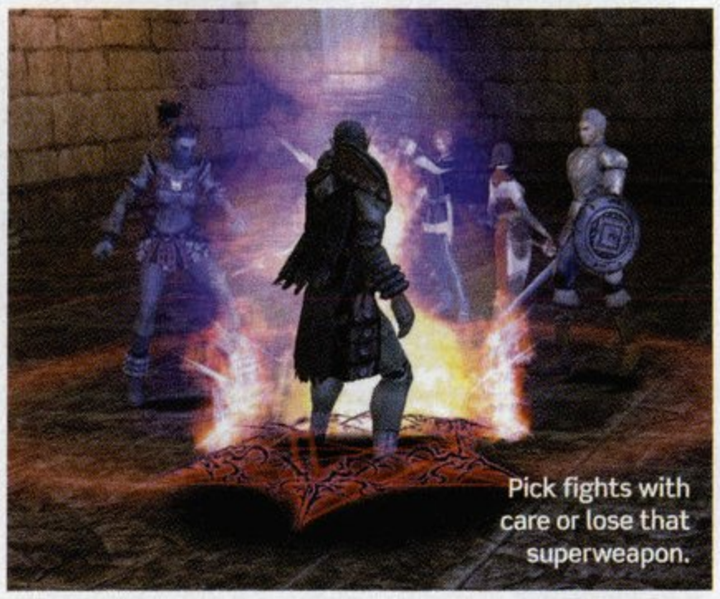
91%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Activision ■ **Developer** id Software. ■ **They say** P4 1.5GHz CPU, 384Mb RAM, 3D card with Pixel Shaders ■ **We say** 2.0GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 128Mb 3D card ■ **Multiplayer** 1-4, LAN or Internet ■ **Link** www.doom3.com ■ **Community** www.d3files.com ■ **Influenced by** Nobody, these are the pioneers! ■ **Alternatively** Far Cry, Painkiller

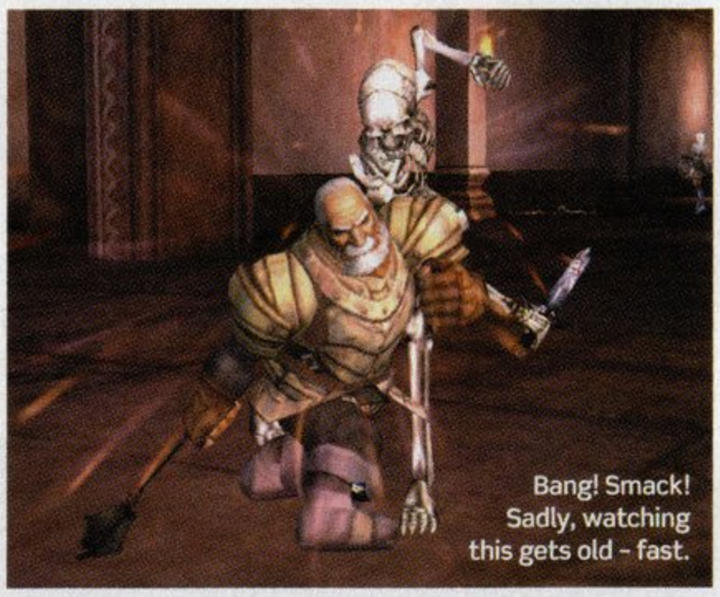
LINEAGE II
THE CHAOTIC CHRONICLES

You just know it's going to start: "It was a dark and stormy night..."

Graphically, *Lineage II* varies, but the *Unreal* engine does offer some spectacular sights.



Pick fights with care or lose that superweapon.



Bang! Smack! Sadly, watching this gets old - fast.

Thumbnail Review

A fantasy MMORPG that cuts straight to the combat.

- ☑ Kill monsters
- ☑ And more monsters
- ☑ Extra monster genocide
- ☒ Endless treadmill

Don't bother unless you are sure you're going to play *Lineage II* long enough to reach the full-on, high-level stuff.

Three million users. That's one hell of a lot of people – the kind of number that most online RPGs can only dare to dream of. Only the original *Lineage* has ever managed it, and that's quite an achievement for a MMORPG that most gamers over here have never heard of.

Assuming you have, *Lineage II* is the long-awaited sequel. It's one of the easiest MMORPGs in the world to get into, with a heavy focus on combat, little crafting to worry about, a level progression curve that more or less hands you a weapon at each level and leaves you to get on with it, and some of the most apathetic monsters ever. From the off, you get to feel relatively tough – blitzing around the world, being ignored by monsters, clambering up the fastest-opening ten levels we've ever played.

Unfortunately, this doesn't last. Just when you're starting to feel the wind beneath your feet, *Lineage II* turns into a real grind. There are quests, monsters, stuff to find, kill and collect gold from – but the real high-level game is about besieging and controlling castles, joining up with other players and forming huge guilds. Which is where it gets tricky. You have to be exceptionally devoted to your thrashing action to get that far, and realistically, you probably won't be.

Lineage II offers some excellent graphics and fantastic music, but little sense of place. You're often left wandering randomly, in search of something to do except hit more lazy monsters.

If you can find a group of players that you genuinely get on with and knuckle down for some good, old-fashioned levelling, then

A LOAD OF PANTS

Viconia's Secret: We examine the summer catalogue

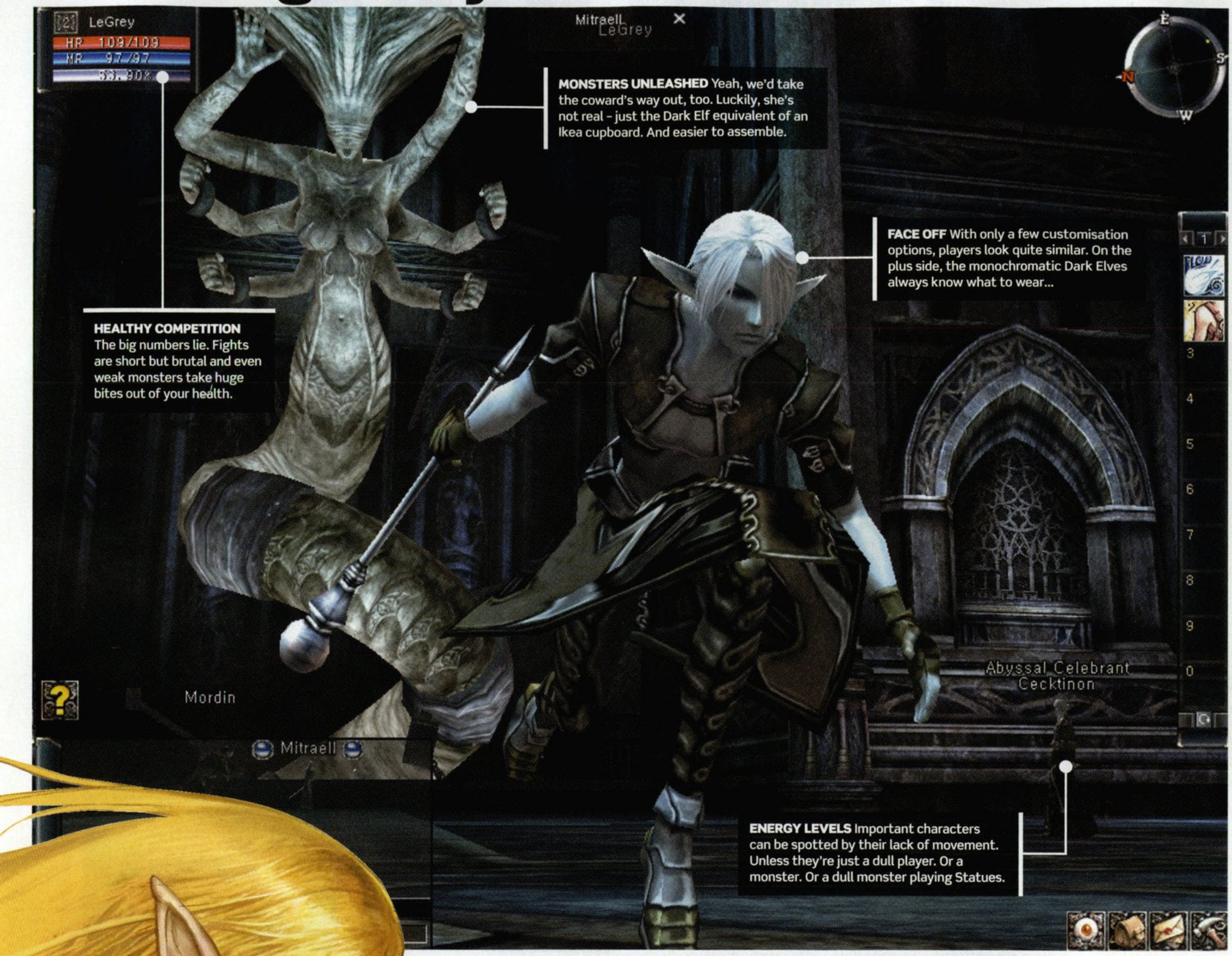
Lineage II's speciality, it would seem, is pants – and we're talking thongs rather than apple-catchers

Meet a typical Dark Elf lady. Their uniforms consist of thongs, wobbling protrusions on the other side, and goosepimples. No target market pandering going on there at all, then.

And if you thought that was bad, try their Regular Elf cousins. Note the loving care and attention on those undergarments. The bungee camera seems quite obsessed with them.

Curiously, the gentlemen don't get the same treatment. All the male characters fall squarely into the 'tortured goth' or 'smooth-jawed bishounen' moulds. How peculiar.

"I'm right on your tail..."


LeGrey
HP 109/109
MP 97/97
53.90%
Mitraell
LeGrey
Mordin
Mitraell
Abyssal Celebrant
Cecktinon
MONSTERS UNLEASHED Yeah, we'd take the coward's way out, too. Luckily, she's not real – just the Dark Elf equivalent of an Ikea cupboard. And easier to assemble.
FACE OFF With only a few customisation options, players look quite similar. On the plus side, the monochromatic Dark Elves always know what to wear...
HEALTHY COMPETITION The big numbers lie. Fights are short but brutal and even weak monsters take huge bites out of your health.
ENERGY LEVELS Important characters can be spotted by their lack of movement. Unless they're just a dull player. Or a monster. Or a dull monster playing Statues.

Lineage II does have upsides. Most notably, it's one of the few MMORPGs with PvP systems – any purple dots on your radar representing players who have been caught attacking their fellow man. Red dots are those foul brigands and fiends caught blotting their copybook, engaging in that unspeakable act of Player Killing.

The fact that you can be attacked, and of course attack in return, adds a whole new level – along with the fact that you have to gauge your enemies carefully. Even when looking for players to group up with, *Lineage* only hands out a vague 'Higher... Lower' value on the chart. Fail to note the +2000 Sword Of Much Crushing in the little dwarf-girl's hands, and you're going to get laughed back to your home village with your tail between your legs, without one of your shiny inventory items.

Laughed back to your home village...

Sadly, these ideas can't get past the often bland worlds you'll be fighting in. Villages are crammed to bursting point, but outside their walls you can often be left on your own, hunting for action and pining for the most active worlds of *Camelot*, *EverQuest* – or, in our case, *World of Warcraft*.

For a modern sequel to one of the most popular online games ever, we expected more from *Lineage II*. Look to *City of Heroes* for a straight-up monster-pounding game, or possibly *Shadowbane* for a city-building end-game that gives some real incentive to progress.

RICHARD COBBETT

PC GAMES ADDICT One for the powergamers only

IT'S ›Laborious ›Challenging ›Bigger than most

IT'S NOT ›Gripping ›Original ›Emotionally involving

Ongoing

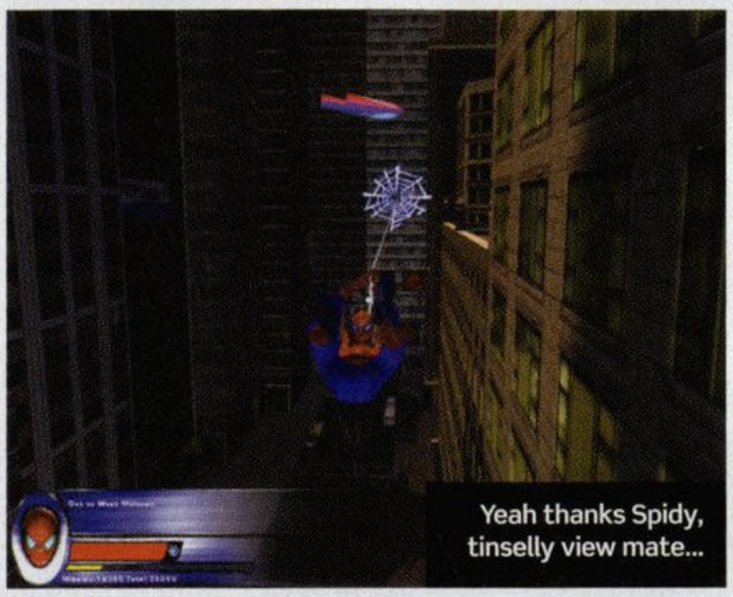
72%

■ **Release** Out Now (USA – online purchase available) ■ **Publisher** NCSoft ■ **Developer** In-house ■ **They say** PIII 800, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D card ■ **We say** P4 2GHz, 512MB RAM, 64MB 3D card ■ **Multiplayer** Online only ■ **Link** www.lineage2.com ■ **Community** www.lineage2.wrw.be ■ **Influenced by** Every other MMORPG ever... ■ **Alternatively** *Shadowbane*

SPIDER-MAN 2

Is Spider-Man stuck in his own web of design flaws?

"I could always coccoon her and keep her for later..."

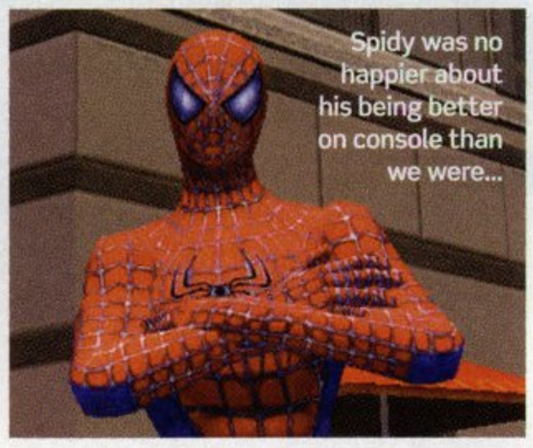


Spider-Man 2 on PC is "official movie merchandise", much like the Xbox, PS2 and GameCube *Spider-Man 2* games. In fact, each game shares identical box-art and packaging. However, *Spider-Man 2* on PC is a completely different game to the console incarnations. Whilst Spidey on console is a fun action adventure that allows the player complete freedom to explore the city of New York as only a Spider-Man can, this PC game is a bizarre U-turn that ditches all that good work developer Treyarch achieved on the consoles, in favour of a simplistic mouse clicking exercise that seems aimed at kids under the age of 10. So, we have to ask: What in Stan Lee's name were they thinking?

At the very least, you'd hope that *Spider-Man 2* on PC would be a solid port of the console game, maybe with enhanced graphics and possibly a better interface. Utterly perplexing then, is this decision to hand the PC version of *Spider-Man 2* to another developer (little-known studio, The Fizz Factor) and have them craft this simplistic game engine that feels like it's been kicking around since 1998.

So let's get this right: *Spider-Man 2* on console offers complete non-linear freedom to explore NYC from the tops of the highest building to the alleyways below, complete with a web-slinging mechanic that gives you total freedom and complete control of Spider-Man's acrobatic powers. On PC, however, Spider-Man is controlled with the WASD keys and the mouse, wherein web-slinging is achieved by aiming the mouse at web icons that hang in the sky and clicking the mouse button to swing. In fact, you need to be close enough to the icons for them to activate, so if Spider-Man is standing on the street, he can't start web-slinging until you move him near one of the floating icons. Climbing up walls also reveals that every building has an invisible barrier at a certain height preventing you from even reaching the top! Shooting webs is a context sensitive action, so you literally need to move the mouse around until a "web" icon appears before you can shoot at an enemy, otherwise Spidey seems utterly impotent. Boss battles also pop-up with a pictorial explanation on what to do to beat the boss, as if you're reading a children's storybook rather than facing a frightening foe.

As if you're reading a children's storybook



And this is where the reality kicks home. Whilst the console games are aimed at your average gamer looking to "be" Spider-Man, this PC game has bizarrely been made for kids who might be happier to just "watch" Spider-Man and click the mouse button every so often. The problem is, we just can't understand the logic behind this decision. If you own any consoles as well as a PC, go get Activision's console *Spider-Man 2* and enjoy the solid and genuinely fun gameplay it has to offer instead.

ELIOT FISH

PC GAMES ADDICT Point and click cartoon action for kids

IT'S › Colourful › Easy to play › Completed in an evening

IT'S NOT › Suited to the PC platform › For discerning gamers › Logical

Poisonous

53%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Activision ■ **Developer** The Fizz Factor ■ **They say** 600Mhz, 128MB RAM, 3D card ■ **We say** PIII, 128MB RAM, 3D card ■ **Multiplayer** No
■ **Link** www.activision.com/microsite/spider-man ■ **Influenced by** Kid's cartoons and the ease of Minesweeper ■ **Alternatively** The far superior Spider-Man 2 on console

fun,
anyone?
PlayStation.2

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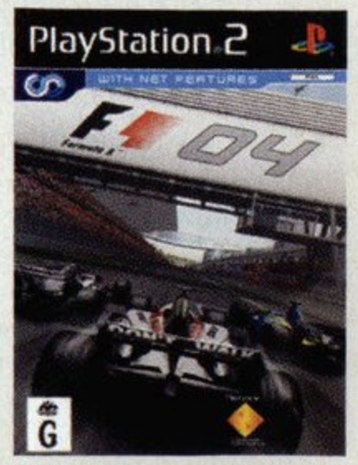
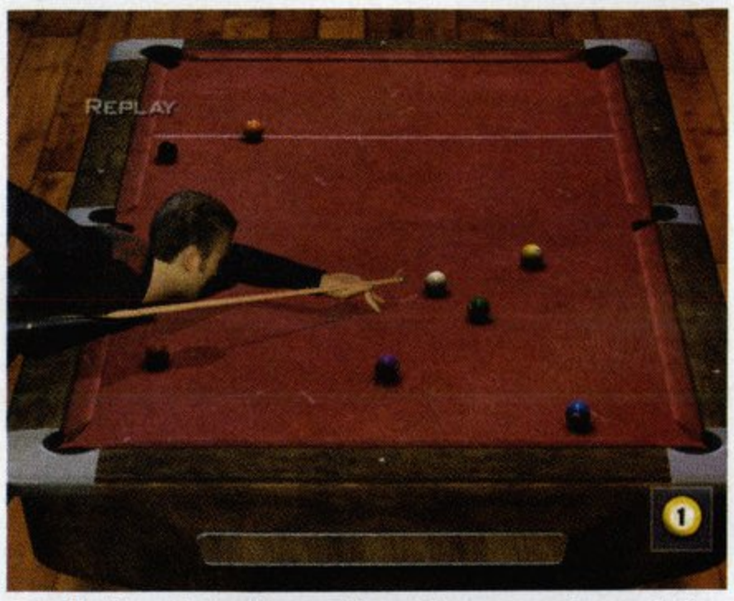


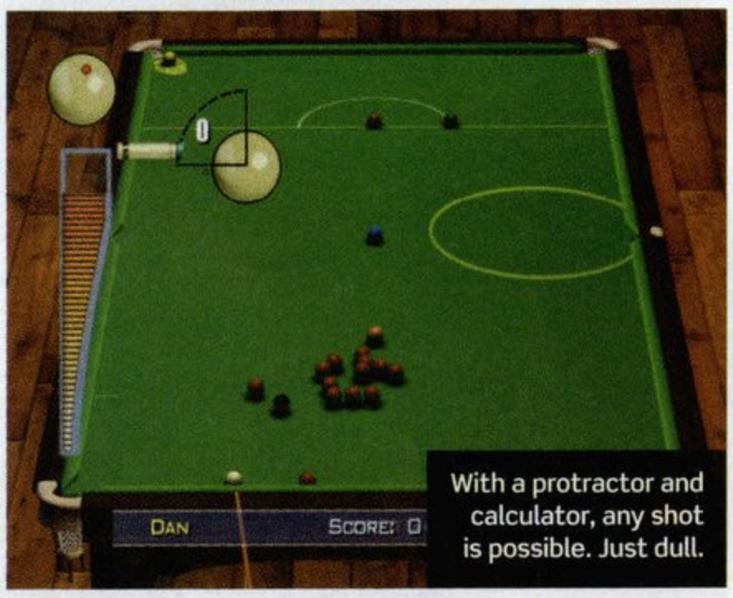
WWW.PS2-F104.COM

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SNOOKER 2004

Pub sports with precision, this is a serious stick game...



8-Ball is for pub-dwellers, major pool comps work on 9-ball.



With a protractor and calculator, any shot is possible. Just dull.

With more strategic options, snooker is the thinking man's game. No wonder most pubs stick to pool then...

Every gamer out there is aware that staying inside and playing video games all day is not only bad for your health, but also considered physically lazy by the general populace. Now imagine how lazy you'll be deemed if you stop walking to your local pub for a game of stick because you've got *World Championship Snooker* on your PC.

It's a social comment leveled at near every computer game involving a cue, but as a player decent enough to think about ball placement of every shot, consciously choose to play spin and capable of jumping at a variety of ranges, I can testify that *World Championship Snooker 2004* can teach novices how to play, and even give veterans a chance to better understand the weaker aspects of their game.

WCS2004 provides more than a few ways to play, and loads of officially licensed material. Over 128 players, 10 licensed tournaments and some of the circuit's more famous venues make the game an easy way to get to know what goes on at the top level. However it's the sheer number of play modes that include trick shot challenges and general coaching, on top of 8-ball, 9-ball, snooker, online play, tournaments and a career mode that make *WCS2004* such a comprehensive snooker title.

Adjust every aspect of a shot

Some snooker games have adopted the same approach to playing a shot that golf games have, using the mouse to act out the motion of a shot. *WCS2004* does not use this feature, which may annoy those craving a tactile feel, but any purist of pool or snooker will quickly point out that there's simply no way to realistically simulate shifting the path of a cue with a mouse. The mouse is in front of you, whereas a player grips a cue behind them – it's not a similar motion at all.

This leaves the player with a shot system that allows them to carefully adjust every aspect of a shot, and see the results with the press of a button to execute the stroke. The upshot is that this becomes a fantastic way to learn the effects of adjusting spin, cue elevation, power and so forth by simply adjusting on aspect of each stroke. Realists however will immediately notice that having such accurate and conscious control over every minor aspect of a shot is not so easy as *WCS2004* makes it look.

For that reason, it's good that there's the option to switch to a higher difficulty setting where there are no guide lines to show the path the cue and target ball will take. This is arguably harder than playing on a real table.

Felt acquire chalk marks, balls reflect pool halls with curved clarity and player animations are all quite admirable. The players themselves however just don't compare to the stuff we're accustomed to seeing in simulations of sports like golf, soccer and tennis. Despite lacking a little flair, the commentary is good, often making a better shot all the sweeter when the man on the mic called a safety shot.

Perhaps *World Championship Snooker 2004* is too technical to recommend to anyone just after a bit of fun, but for people with a genuine interest in snooker or pool, plus those who would like to learn some sound theory, it's a game with enough to it to be worth looking into.

DAN TOOSE

PC GAMES ADDICT The most comprehensive stick-sim about

IT'S › Snooker › Accurate › Chock full of features

IT'S NOT › Tactile › As sociable as the pub › Bursting with character

Sticky

74%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Codemasters ■ **Developer** Codemasters ■ **They say** PIII 800, 128Mb RAM, 32 MB 3D card ■ **We say** PIII 800, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card ■ **Multiplayer** Two-player, multiplayer online ■ **Link** www.codemasters.co.uk/snooker2004/ ■ **Influenced by** Mispent youths, pub sports, waistcoats. ■ **Alternatively** World Champinship Pool 2004

Traditional chess notation and dated PCs: a match made in heaven.

All the latest in graphical glitz, so the AI can thrash you in style

CHESSMASTER 10TH EDITION

We're sorry, but a "Pawn Rush" is not a legitimate tactic.

It takes a lot of guts to re-package one of the oldest games in history, especially one you can play for free with a few lumps of plastic on a park bench. But then, *Chessmaster* is no ordinary video game. It's not so much defined by what is left out (phosphate covered seats, insipid human opponents) but by what is included; namely the most powerful, fully featured chess program this side of Deep Blue.

Having ditched the millennium-fixated nomenclature of the past (2000, 8000, etc), the latest iteration in this grand gaming tradition builds on its already impressive AI credentials with an overwhelming array of tutorial options. Heavily laden with reassuring voice samples, International Master Josh Waitzkin has compiled his own interactive academy. Part crib sheet, part electronic book, it runs through the roles of each piece, openings, the finer points of pawn placement, even the psychology of chess. He also gives commentary on some of his famous games, with a view to explaining these theories in action.

But it only works if chess excites you

US chess champ Larry Christiansen is also on board, adding dry commentary to his own victories of the recent past. The counterpoint of his drawling accent against the *Speak 'n' Spell* like recounting of moves makes for hypnotic entertainment in its own right, irrespective of the strategies and practices being demonstrated. Plus there're heavily annotated historical games, and if the menus are to be believed, a collection of raw data on half a million or so historical games for your perusal.

If there's a small child in the house, or an easily intimidated adult, there is also a battery of simple chess puzzles and games for learning the ropes behind forks, pins, and the overall mental gymnastics required to get around the board. Matching AI for every occasion is a selection of tasteful, high-resolution chessboards: icy metal, warm wood, tribal figurines, and even wacky animated sets. The novelty that once kept *Battle Chess* afloat has been put into its proper context; a minor novelty feature in a larger, more robust game.

Perhaps chess's greatest value is as a means for obsessive-compulsives to socialise, and this base is more than covered. With the 10th edition comes the framework for online tournaments, chat, the works. The interface is clear, concise, and easily customised. You can crank it up with the latest in hardware acceleration, or run it on a feeble Pentium III.

About the only thing that the new *Chessmaster* doesn't have is that old bearded guy on the front of the box. Still, this is not *Warcraft* – there is no story, save the cult of personality that surrounds Bobby Fischer and his ilk. This is a superb bit of software, but it only works if chess excites you, or you have a latent capacity for chess addiction.

JAMES COTTEE

PCGAMES ADDICT **A nail in the coffin of board gaming...**

IT'S ›Comprehensive ›Beautiful ›Ideal for chess newbies

IT'S NOT ›Lightweight ›Half-Arsed ›Just Another Sequel

Masterful

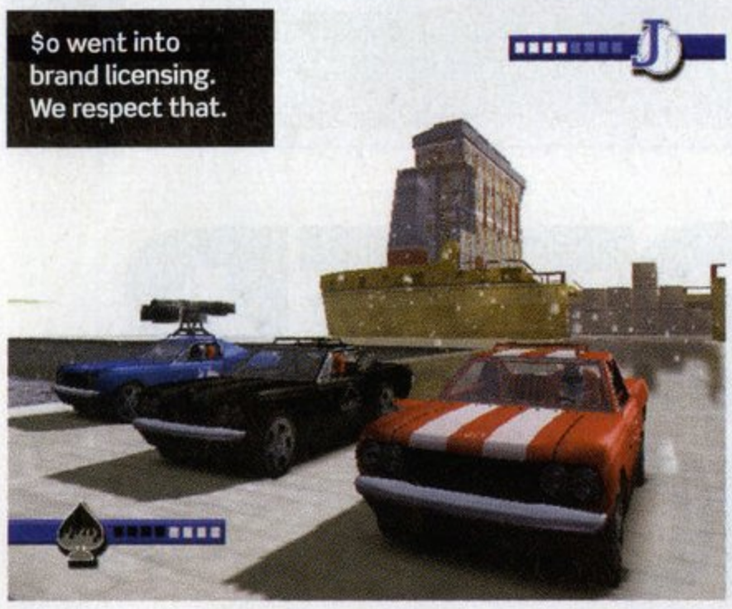
90%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Ubisoft ■ **Developer** Ubisoft ■ **They say** PIII 450, 128 MB RAM, 4MB 3D Card ■ **We say** PIII 1GHz, 256 MB RAM, 32 MB 3d Card
■ **Multiplayer** LAN, Internet ■ **Link** www.chessmaster.com ■ **Community** www.uschess.org ■ **Influenced by** Texas Instruments, Fresh ■ **Alternatively** Civ III, The Korsun Pocket

MASHED

Throw away that old C64 – *Super Sprint* has been reborn on the PC

Ice to meet you: Tracks are varied and treacherous



Artist's Impression. Or, if you prefer, a Serving Suggestion. Either way, expect mayhem.

Top-down racing is a sorely neglected genre. The hardcore simulation mechanics of, say, *V8 Supercars 2* is well and good for obsessive, steering-wheel owning propeller-heads, but what of the more casual gamer? What of the bitter old, the clumsy young, the visiting friend who doesn't know the controls? What of the drunk? Less autistic folks like to race too, and it is to this wider, mainstream market that *Mashed* has been geared.

But just because it's simple, doesn't mean it's pointless. *Mashed* has complexity that belies its accessibility, and rewards committed players with a plethora of ways to win. The basic play mechanic is a racing game in the mould of *Micro Machines*. An overhead camera flies a fixed distance above the track, looking down on the four racing vehicles. When one falls too far behind, the race stops momentarily as points are adjusted; The first to eight points wins.

But there's more at work here than racing lines and pre-programmed taunts. The cartoonish, exotic tracks are rife with death-dealing drops. A simple ram is all it takes to send a rival to oblivion. Knock over some barrels at the roadside, and you might slow down a straggler for those crucial seconds it takes to score a point.

Rife with death-dealing drops

Most conspicuous are the brightly coloured weapon crates, each with a pre-packaged battle strategy of its own. Nabbed the oil or mines? A diagonal cut across the track will cause all manner of mayhem. Got the machine gun? Hang back a tad, and let the auto-aiming do the work. Is that a mortar on your roof-rack? Hand back farther still, and litter the track with wrecks. This *Mad-Max* style mayhem is a lot more fun than *Autoduel* ever was.

Track design shows a wealth of whimsy and imagination. The cars/dune buggies/etc each come with a simple colour scheme and some genuinely amusing AI personalities. The driving physics are simple yet robust, and the game as a whole can be played for seconds or hours without risk of becoming stale.

It is astonishing then that such a refreshing, addictive game is plagued by some incredibly short-sighted limitations. For starters, there's no networking of any kind. No internet play, no LAN connectivity, no null modem… no dice. That's no big deal for a party game, but the controls are similarly hamstrung. Despite the incredibly simple control scheme, only one person can use the keyboard at a time. With a little imagination they could have fit two, or even three players across those 100+ buttons, but instead additional players each need their own control pad.

With these limitations in mind, we're sorry to say that most gamers would be better off buying the PS2 or Xbox version. There is little or no added graphical boost from playing it on the PC, and the $30 cost differential is quickly gobbled up by those controllers you wouldn't have bought otherwise. If your PC already has pride of place in your living room, then *Mashed* is a much better deal, but silly oversights stop it from being the game that makes PCs party machines.

JAMES COTTEE

PC GAMES ADDICT Mindless racing action. Best at parties

IT'S › Top-down racing › Full of variety › Fun

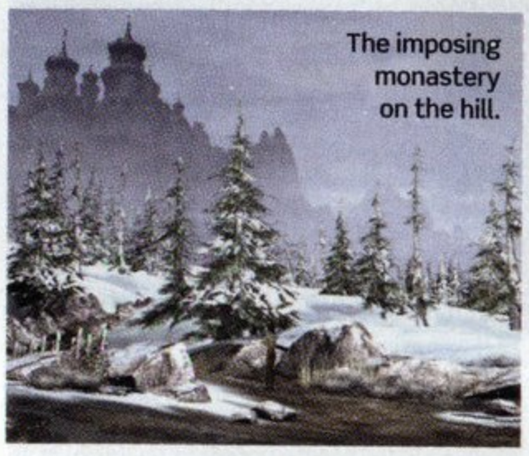
IT'S NOT › Geared to multi-player › Overly Deep › Expensive

Carmageddon **80%**

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Empire ■ **Developer** Supersonic ■ **They say** PIII, 128 MB RAM, 32 MB 3D Card ■ **We say** PIV, 256 MB RAM, 64 MB 3D Card
■ **Multiplayer** Up to 4-players on the one PC ■ **Link** www.getmashed.net ■ **Influenced by** Super Sprint, Mad Max. ■ **Alternatively** Worms World Party, Paramatta Rd

The only bridge in the game that stays up!

No one mock his hat



The imposing monastery on the hill.

No disappointment would be complete without the irritating sidekick.

SYBERIA II

A chill blows through the heart of one sad-faced gamer

This one I'm taking personally. *Syberia* has always been the measure by which I've proved I'm not just a cynical old hack, hating every euro-adventure that comes my way. *Syberia* gave me hope for all the rest because it was a truly great game. And now this.

The first game ended with American lawyer, Kate Walker, finally meeting elderly heir Hans Voralberg. This mysterious son of a factory owner, disowned by his family due to mental illness, had left a trail of clockwork inventions throughout the journey of his life. Together, they planned to explore the peculiar mythology of mammoths living on a lost frozen island called Syberia.

Starting off with their clockwork train stuck at a station in a small wintry town, *Syberia 2* reveals its first change of style: people. The original was a strangely solitary affair, leaving Kate with only the company of Hans' automatons - a move that helped the player empathise with the crippling loneliness of Hans' autistic childhood, unable to identify with anybody but his inventions.

Shoddily told stories and dismal puzzles

Forget that now. The first third of Part Two involves going backwards and forwards between various people-clichés scattered around town, trying to get the train up and running. A string of chores offer no rewards. Every victory is met with punishment. Every completed task reveals another problem. For a third of the game.

But worse are the puzzles themselves. Instead of the obscure object interaction puzzles of the first, this incarnation contains horrid *Myst*-like metallic pattern-solving monstrosities. Just like all the rest. And in keeping with the wretched genre, there are no clues as to what you should be doing, and no tangible rewards for stumbling upon the solution.

The introduction of conversational NPCs has been met with absolutely no expertise, meaning you spend half the time saying, "What mechanical horses?!" to people, despite having just sat through a long and tedious conversation about the damn things in the previous location. And even then, these people aren't used to tell the story. In fact, the whole thing's lazily shoved into a conveniently discovered book. All 20 pages of it. Such narrative crimes were never expected in here.

Syberia was the haunting story of beauty born of tragedy. It was about one woman's rejection of her material life for the love of exploration and imagination. *Syberia 2* offers a half-arsed depiction of a dying man's consumption by madness, and a few hours of shoddily told story and dismal puzzles. Despite looking absolutely beautiful, this is an enormous disappointment, and yet another breached hull.

JOHN WALKER

PC GAMES ADDICT A horrible letdown. 'Nuff said

IT'S › Beautifully painted › Shoddy › Saddening

IT'S NOT › Well constructed › Empathic › Rewarding

Dysappointing **59%**

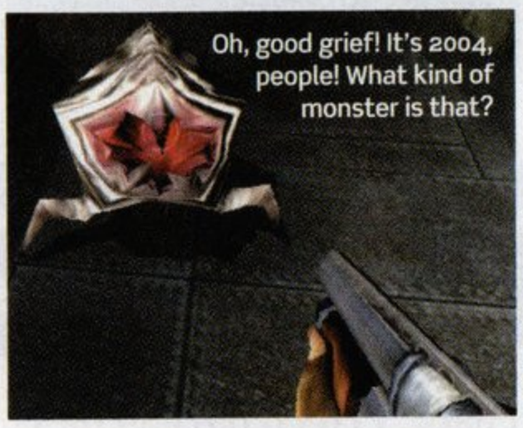
■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Microids ■ **Developer** In-house ■ **They say** PII 350, 64Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card ■ **We say** 1GHz, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card
■ **Multiplayer** None ■ **Link** www.syberia2-game.com ■ **Influenced by** The Longest Journey ■ **Alternatively** Syberia

KREED

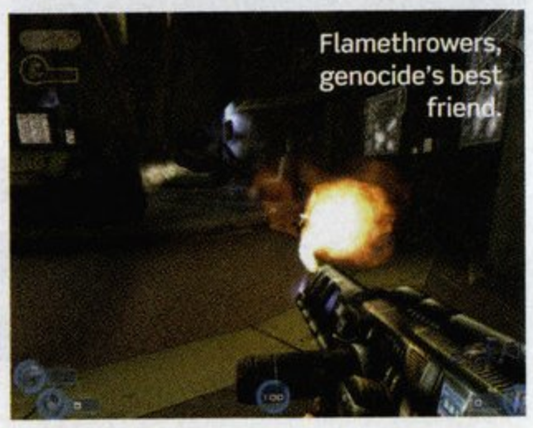
And the Kreed and the colour and the name don't matter, if you're bored

Doom III auditions? Certainly, sirs, right to your leftaaaaaaaaargh!

Meanwhile, in a game of *System Shock 2*, not far away...



Oh, good grief! It's 2004, people! What kind of monster is that?



Flamethrowers, genocide's best friend.

Playing *Kreed* really makes you think. If facehuggers are baby aliens, are their parents just taking part in the universe's bloodiest Take Your Kids To Work Day? Why do designers of dark, gloomy spaceships always fill them with vents, just the right size for a crawling monster or flamethrower-toting space marine? Why would anyone play rubbish like this with *Doom 3* on the horizon? And what would chocolate covered balsa wood taste like?

Kreed is dull. Very dull. Were you to somehow drain out every single drop of raw, adrenaline-pumping action from it and stick it in a bottle, it would play exactly the same and you would have the universe's finest insomnia cure. If you've been pining, desperately longing for a game where you charge around bland corridors, wielding bland weapons against bland aliens, this is the game for you. We may not have gotten on with shooters like *Chaser, Breed* and *Chrome*, but at least they genuinely tried to put their unique stamp on the alien-hunting action. *Kreed*'s only real hook is its backstory – the computers, journals and cutscenes going into an almost frightening amount of detail on every little aspect of the gameworld. You'll be hard pressed to care, especially when blasting around in search of nothing more exciting than the next access card or door-unlocking control panel, but at least you'll always have something to read.

The finest cure for insomnia in the universe

What makes this worse is that the action supposedly travels inside an interstellar Bermuda Triangle where anything can happen, but seldom does. Why aren't we straight into space-bending portals and twisted alien landscapes? Why does enigmatic, twisted space look like every single other FPS ever? Where's the sheer imagination of games like *Anachronox* – or the imaginative openers of hits in such titles as *Alice* and *FAKK2* that suck you in from the outset? Not bloody here, that's where. Playing *Kreed* is like being given a free ride in the space shuttle, only to get dropped off in Bognor Regis.

It can't even claw back much ground as an old-school shooter. The weapons, aliens and humans alike scamper up to be blasted, collapsing after a few hits, or occasionally taking your head off after your battle-hardened marine casually spends half-an-hour reloading his shotgun. Oh, the AI's decent enough; there's some pretty special effects – notably the water and lighting routines – and it does (eventually) start opening out into a bit more than spaceship corridors circa 1999, but it's all too little too late. *Kreed* is neither bad enough to deserve a torrent of abuse, nor good enough to recommend that anyone give it a thought, especially with games like *Far Cry* already on the shelves.

RICHARD COBBETT

PC GAMES ADDICT A bland space blaster with no panache

IT'S › Tough › Not entirely dumb › But entirely dull

IT'S NOT › Thrilling › Punchy › *Doom III* (it wishes...)

Unkreative

50%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Acclaim ■ **Developer** Burut CT ■ **They say** 800Mhz, 128MB RAM, 32MB Graphics card ■ **We say** 2GHz, 512Mb RAM, 128Mb graphics ■ **Multiplayer** LAN, internet, 1-10 ■ **Link** www.kreed3d.com ■ **Influenced by** *Doom III*. And how... ■ **Alternatively** Any other FPS game of the last two years

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PlayStation®2

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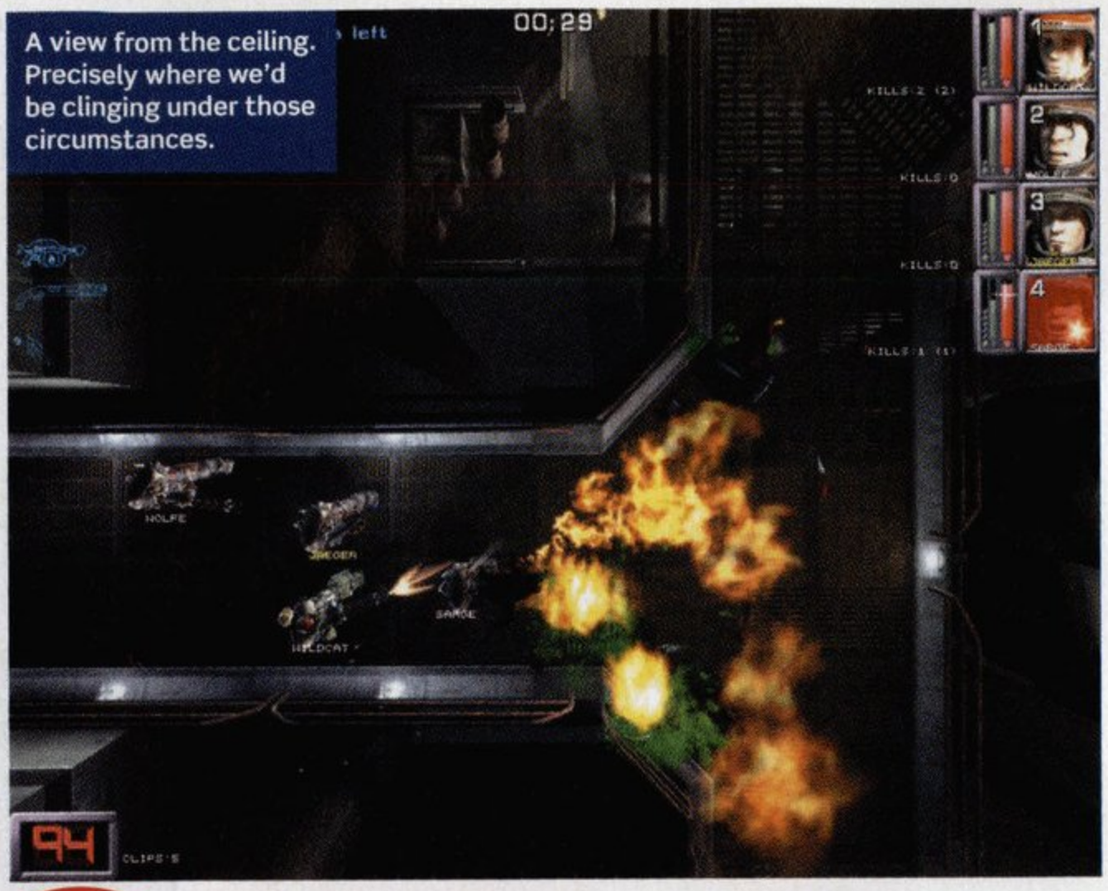
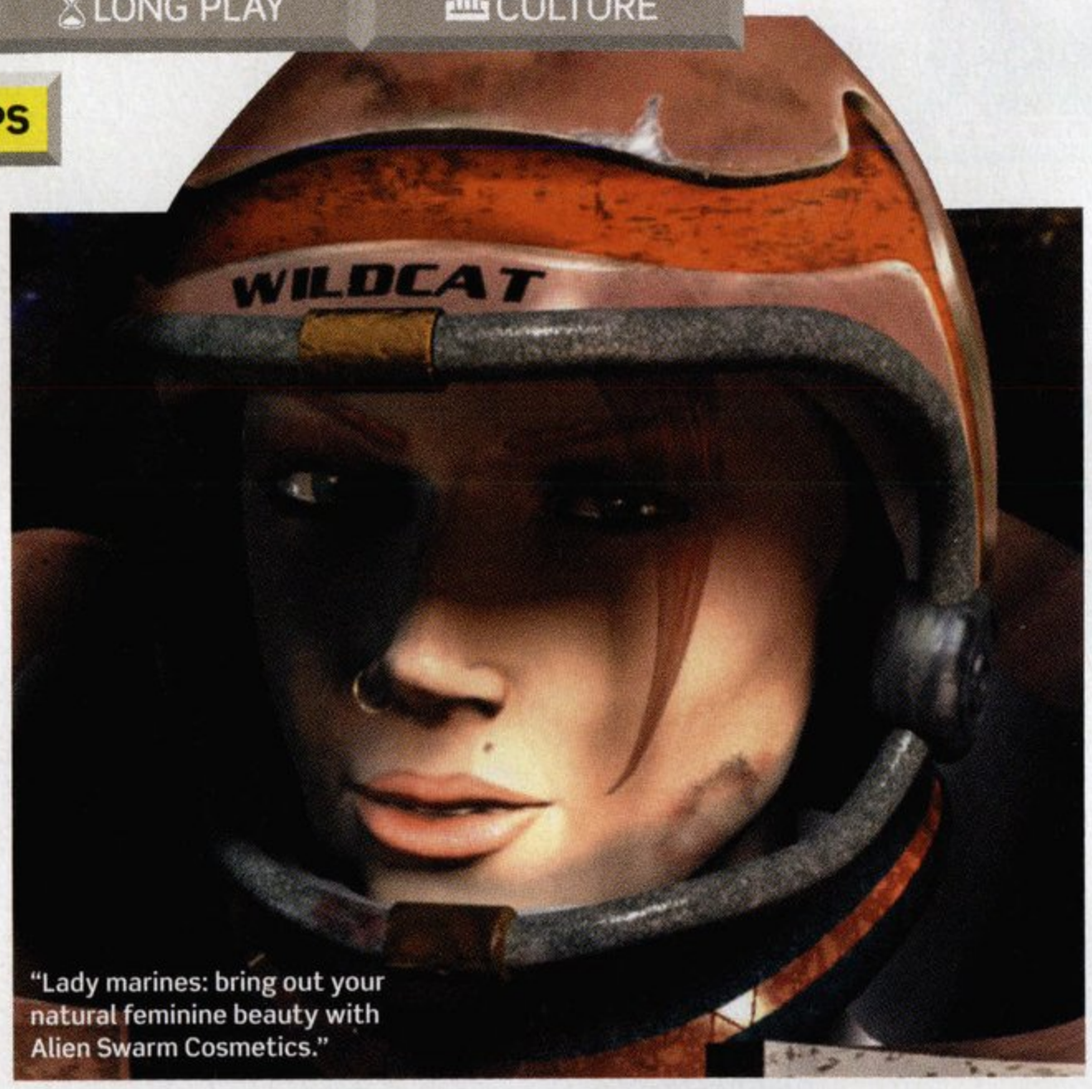
EXTRA-LIFE

Play outside the box

THE FINEST GAMING FREEBIES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS



A view from the ceiling. Precisely where we'd be clinging under those circumstances.



"Lady marines: bring out your natural feminine beauty with Alien Swarm Cosmetics."

CELEB

HI, I'M A GAME DEVELOPER

Name Jim Tso

Credits *Star Wars: The Clone Wars, Star Wars: Galaxies, Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb, Earth 2150*

My fave game: "I'm playing the *Rise of Nations* expansion, *Thrones and Patriots*, at the moment. It's one of the better RTS games that I've played over the last few years."

My fave mod: "*Desert Combat*, it's still the best one out there in my opinion."

The thing I'm looking forward to: "I'm definitely looking forward to playing *Full Spectrum Warrior*. I haven't played a good squad-based tactical game since *X-COM*."

UT2004 MOD

Alien Swarm

Not just another bug hunt

DOWN LOADER
A brilliant bug-blasting mod for *Unreal Tournament 2004*

Alien Swarm is Jim Cameron's most violent movie moments in game form. Marines that sweat steroids and bleed bullets, up against aliens that tear into people like a fat man tears into a cheap buffet.

It's a top-down tactical squad shooter, both single and multiplayer friendly, from the makers of *UT* mod *Thievery*. Offline you have four marines in a group, directly controlling one and guiding the others through a grim mining colony. The outpost is a termite mound of alien warriors and flying vermin.

Online, you can join up to eight players for co-operative play. It's the same bug-crushing game, with seven missions to enjoy.

The controls are the usual W, A, S, D, but the crosshair is swept over the screen with the mouse, determining both the direction and distance of the shot. Such an odd method of control takes a bit of getting used to, but several wasted team-mates later, you'll be focusing the crosshair with deadly accuracy. The squad roster has a choice of eight salty violence mongers, each with their own skills. Group harmony is key as you try to strike a balance between the leadership, the technical, the medical and the psychopathic, particularly when the missions require certain skills to advance. If your tech guys bite the dust, then it's usually game over, man.

The weapons have their own synergy, too – tool up with the flame unit, and you can barbeque the beasts to your heart's content, but beware: in a firefight things can get hectic, and your squad-mates are flammable.

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

118Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.blackcatgames.com
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	*UT2004*

Acid-burning, top-down bloodbath. We love it

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BROADBAND BREEZE ‹ › BROADBAND BREAKER

10Mb	50Mb	150Mb	1Gb
56k friendly	*Modem mare*	*Modem meltdown*	*Nightie night*

GTA: VICE CITY MOD

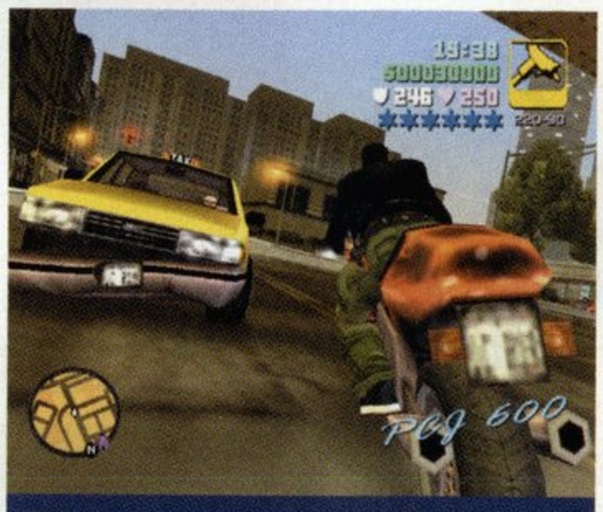
Liberty City

At last, you're at liberty to enjoy this city properly

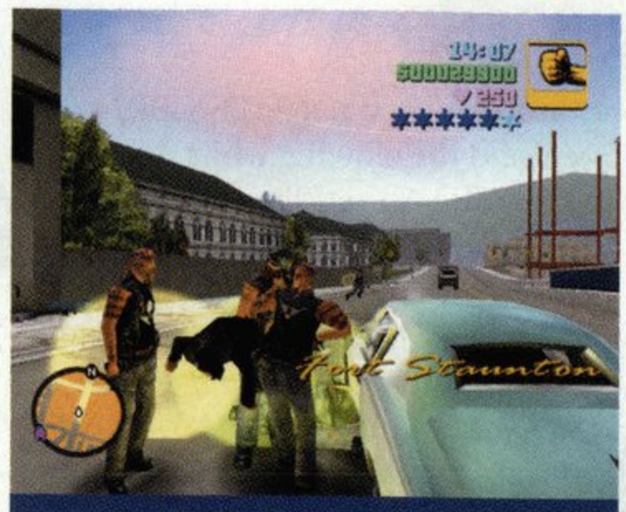
Hardcore Pawn

If chess seems an unlikely theme for a team deathmatch *UT2004* mod, take a look at *Checkmate*. You spawn as a pawn, but by killing enemy units you can buy the right to come back as a grenade launcher-wielding knight, a sniping bishop, a lumbering rook or a queen with a guided rocket launcher. The king is the highest-scoring lesser unit from the last round, and has nothing but a souped-up shield gun and masses of health. It's an inspired and potentially brilliant mod, it's just a shame there aren't more people playing online. Find it on the DVD, host a game. Check it out, mates.

On your DVD >Mods



"Ere, you'll never guess who I 'ad ramming the front of me taxi on 'is motorbike last week..."



It was the Liberty City Gay Bikers League, and things were looking bad for Tommy Vercetti.

Bored with *Vice City*'s twin islands? Need somewhere else to tear about on your PCJ 600, evading the cops and mowing down pedestrians? Take a trip back to the town where it all started. The helpfully titled *Liberty City* mod simply replaces the sunny beaches of Vice with the grimy streets of Liberty. If you endured the notoriously buggy PC release of *GTA III*, you'll thrill at the smoothness of it running on *Vice City*'s game engine. And if it's all new to you, so much the better.

Unfortunately, there are no functioning missions in the current release of this mod , but there are bonuses aplenty on top of the new environment. For a start, motorbikes and helicopters have been added (Ross' special tip: hold Shift and right click to get an instant PCJ and Hunter), and the visuals touched-up. The mini-map only shows your safe-houses, but these are well-stocked with weapons, health and bribes. Now go play.

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

62.5Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.gtagaming.com
Discs	Unavailable. Rockstar no like it
Requires	*GTA: Vice City*
A new playground for your *GTA* antics	

MACHINIMA

PANDORA'S BOX 2: THE SHOWDOWN

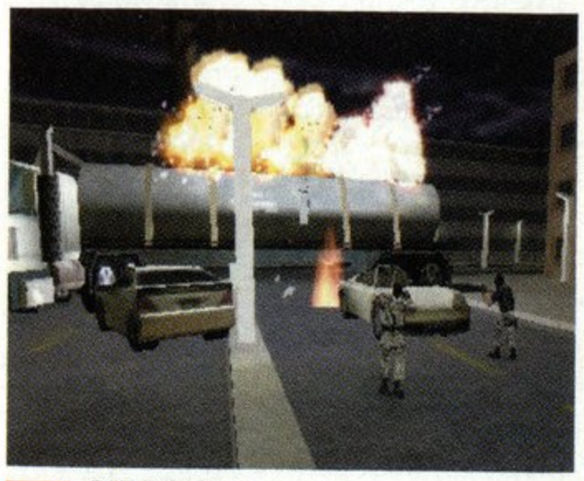
Why should I download it? It's a riotous action movie featuring shootouts, car chases and incredi-explosions, and it's entirely scripted in *Counter-Strike*.

DOWN LOADER MOVIE THRILL

1 SCENE 1
Our heroes Mark and Petrov shoot their way out of captivity. Top voice-acting.

2 SCENE 2
Aha! Some clues to the whereabouts of their arch-rival Sonny...

3 SCENE 3
...Leading to an almighty shootout with Sonny's henchmen and a police roadblock.



4 SCENE 4
A suitably explosive end to our tale – but is the ultimate weapon still out of reach?

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

258Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	http://pandora.team-fonzie.net
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	DivX
Michael Mann let loose with the *CS* engine	

SHAREWARE

Our Lunchtime Legends

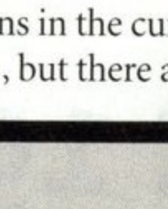
Gaming snacks between desktop meals

LOCK ON

This is a perfect top-down shoot-'em-up – or 'schmup' to poncey console types. It's not just about quick reactions – most of your play is about managing risk. Your missiles are slow moving and attack in absolutely straight lines: fine if you're firing from point blank range, but not so helpful if you're trying to pick off a single enemy from afar. So it's mostly about taking opportunities to get in close, fire off a volley, and get clear. What? Emergent tactics in such a simple, 2D shooter? Madness.

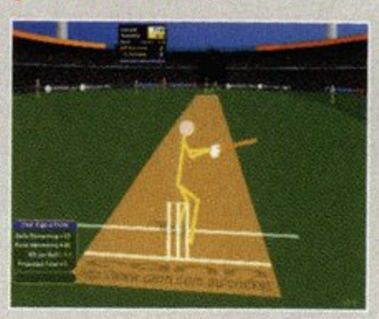
On the disc >Extras

SKI STUNT

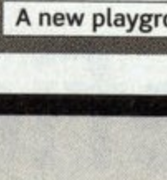


Why risk your neck when you can watch 2D ragdolls crumple into a broken heap on your behalf? Your skier changes his posture according to the position of your mouse – so to pull off a front-flip, you have to move it from bottom left (crouching, leaning back) to top-right (standing, leaning forwards) fast enough to make him jump. *Ski Stunt* has you sliding inexorably toward a series of ever more ludicrous obstacles, and flipping over them is more fun than popping bubble-wrap.

On the disc >Extras



STICK CRICKET



We've been yearning for a good cricket game since, well, we started dominating world cricket. Who would have thought we'd have our willow and leather dreams fulfilled by stick men? So simple, so criminally addictive, this Flash-based game puts you into bat against a string of real-world opponents as you hook, drive and slice your way to a target while the next opponent and a bigger run-chase awaits. The best news of all, you have to play as our all conquering cricket team. Huzzah!

http://keiran.id.au/cricket

SPACED PENGUIN

Launch a penguin through the vacuum of space to help him reach his ship. It's silly, but has a solid physics core to play with. Planets exert a gravitational pull on the plucky penguin, swinging him wildly off course and into the void. You have to overcome the planet's influence, so judging the distance and power of your launch is critical to success. A wonderful mouse-controlled little Flash game to while away sandwich time.

www.bigideafun.com/penguins/arcade/spaced_penguin

MAPS

UT2004 Bonus Packs

Time for another unreality check

UT2004 is one of the most mod-friendly shooters, but a healthy chunk of the community are of the opinion that it's a great game right out of the box. To this end, they've satisfied their creative urges by creating... more of the same. The best of these mods now form volumes one and two of the *Community Bonus Pack*.

CBPs – as they're more often called – are free bundles of the highest-quality user-made maps, models and tweaks, adding to the game the way an expansion pack might. And the quantity and quality of the output so far could easily pass for something bought off the shelf: the 41 new maps are even more impressive-looking than the official ones, particularly the beautiful underwater 'CTF-CBP2-Deep' and the glowing white desert of 'ONS-CBP2-Yorda'. The only mutators deemed worthy of inclusion so far have been those of Rachel 'Angel Mapper' Cordone, and the best of these has to be *Spider Steroids* (pictured). It lets you 'grow' the arachnid explosives laid by the Mine-Launcher, expanding their size to the height of a man and giving them enough punch to take out a tank. Winners do use spider-drugs.

A list of servers for the new maps can be found at: **www.ataricommunity.com/forums**.

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

346Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.planetunreal.com/cbp
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	*UT2004*

More than a bonus. Downright essential

DOWN LOADER MAP OVER LOAD

Don't let him get away with that. Respawn, and hunt him down like the cur he is.

Ha! An unpronounceable name won't save you from a humiliating defeat, my friend.

CELEB

ROSSFERATU

Damn this infernal cold! Undead I may be, but this biting winter means I need to drain about double the usual number of victims dry to keep my cheeks from going white to pale blue. My senses dulled, I have been forced to seek only the easiest prey: not for me the supple-limbed youths, all alert eyes and pricked ears. Fortunate, then, that to avoid the fierce burning of the sun I have lurked in my dusty crypt, playing *Thief*. For Garrett has planted seeds in my ancient mind, of new strategems, ways and means.

Though he seeks paltry gold and is bound by fickle mortality, I am Wampyr and crave only blood, screaming victims and the occasional RAM upgrade. Yet much have I learned from his cowardly ways: not to always rip out the throat of every passer-by, for example, and to trust the dusky shadows and bosky hedgerows of my environs.

With ever-growing confidence, I began again to stalk the strong, those lusty givers of the most potent blood. The other night, I spied a prime opportunity: somewhat the worse for drink (which always adds a piquant, heady flavour), a well-built man stumbled towards my hiding place, flask in hand. I could almost see the bulging veins in his neck, and taste his viscous life-liquid. I tensed; I leapt... and awoke in my crypt, after an embarrassing transmogrification to mist and back. My experiences of *Deadly Shadows* should have warned me about the flask's discreet cross, denoting it as holy water, not to mention the man's dog-collar. I think we've all learned something today, nightcrawling chums.

Calling all mods, indy games, machinima, shareware... Send your links to:

pcga@derwenthoward.com.au

BF1942 MOD

Battlefield: 1918

It's a zeppelin-led comeback

There's a surprising paucity of first world war games: a quick office straw poll recalled only two – but neither worth mentioning. But you can now have your fill of trenches and mud with this highly enjoyable *BF1942* mod, which rewinds the maps, vehicles and infantry to their 1918 equivalents.

The setting influences the strategy. Artillery dominates. Rather than blundering forward through barbed wire only to be cut down by unassailable machinegun posts, it's worth retreating to the staging areas of the maps, and taking control of the awesome howitzers. You can then rain down high explosive into the enemy trenches, softening them up for the inevitable Big Push.

Airpower is also very useful, but not as a terror weapon. The biplanes have little effective firepower. Often they just sport a machinegun, which is enough to dogfight in the clouds, but doesn't cut the mustard on the ground. Still, the twenty minuters make excellent spotters. Pilots can call down artillery strikes and watch the infantry disappear in huge showers of earth.

But the zeppelins are the game's true majesty. In true *BF1942* style, you can control these awesome hydrogen monsters, but be warned: they have a turning circle of around a mile.

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

331Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.battlefield1918.de
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	Patched *BF1942*, trenchfoot

Don't wait for the whistle. Go over the top now

Fusion Fighting

Games Fusion, the guys who brought us a string of upgrade packs for *Counter-Strike*, have switched their attention to *Call of Duty*. Their first version of the new *CoD Fusion Pack* is already out there, brimming with countless new weapon skins, bigger banging sounds, new menus and even a fresh map entitled St. Petersburg Seaport. The pack can be used in single and multiplayer (you'll need to select non-pure servers to play online) and replaces all your existing files so be sure to backup first if you're of a nervous disposition. Grab it off our DVD or at **www.games-fusion.net**.

FREEWARE

Starsiege: Tribes

Free *Tribes*. Go to war.

DOWN LOADER
FREE FULL GAME

You took Friendly Fire from Mean Mr Mustard!
Mean Mr Mustard mows down his teammate, Beam X
Mean Mr Mustard's spinfusor caught Goat Boy by surprise.

Tribes' pioneering jump backs and class types make it a unique FPS experience even today.

"Tron? No, never heard of it. Why do you ask?" Influences can be hard to hide.

Before *Planetside*, there was *Tribes*, an almost massively multiplayer, first-person, sci-fi shooter that took place over luscious outdoor maps. It was a gaming anomaly. An excellent team game that never found popularity beyond its loyal hardcore and was denied the adulation lavished upon *Quake* and *UT*. Indeed, when we first played *UT2004*'s Onslaught mode we couldn't help but think that *Tribes* had done it better, five years previously. Now, to celebrate the forthcoming *Tribes: Vengeance*, Vivendi have released the full version of *Starsiege: Tribes*, the game that began the series.

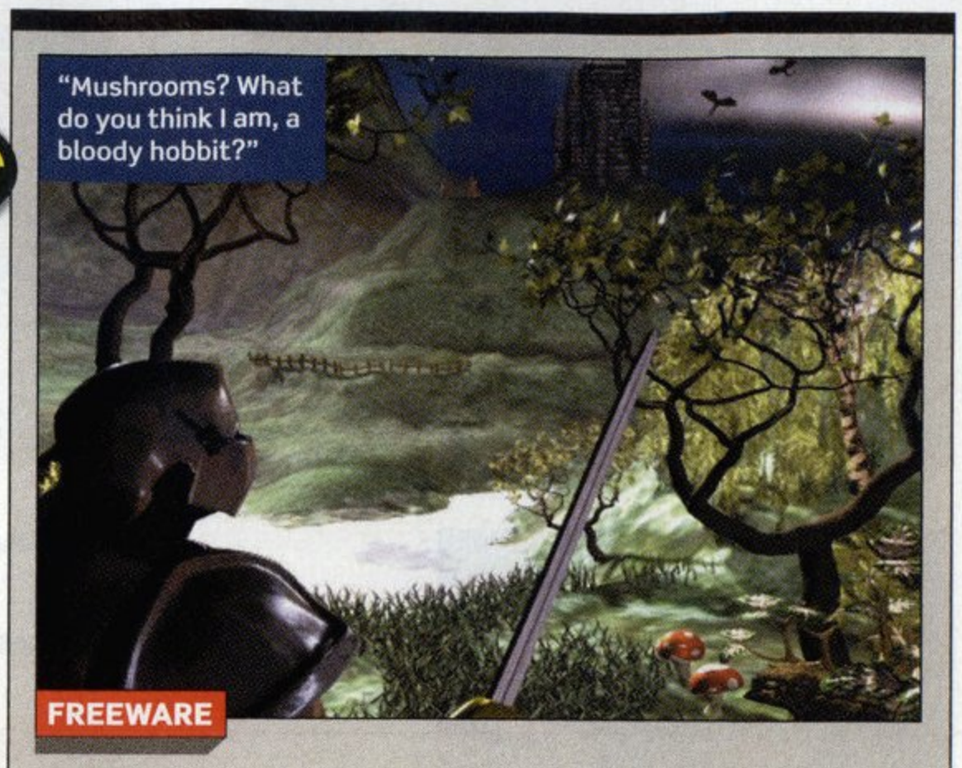
The singleplayer game will give you a taster, but the real meat is in the multiplayer CTF battles. But it won't teach you our favourite tactic: skiing. Clamber to the top of the nearest hill and drop off, using the jetpack to propel your way downward. You'll be boosted to supersonic speeds, flitting across the entire map in seconds.

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

135Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.sierra.com/downloads.do
Discs	Unavailable
Requires	P166, 32Mb RAM
Old sci-fi shooters never die	



FREEWARE

Massive Attack

Free massively multiplayer games

Massively multiplayer gaming is all the rage. Take it from us, you're nobody in the gaming fraternity unless you've got tales of 12-hour all-night play sessions with your goblin under your belt. So to speak. Most of us, however, fidget uncomfortably at the thought of Mr Sony Online slipping into our bank account to snaffle our ten pound notes each month, particularly when we don't always have the time to get our money's worth out of the game. Which is where this lot come in. This bundle of MMORPG games all offer free versions to play. Better still they can be played in your browser or via a tiny client that's quick and easy to install. Don't expect cutting edge graphics engines – this is definitely lo-fi gaming, but incredibly addictive just the same.

THE BEST	FREEBIE FEATURES
RUNESCAPE	The most successful browser-based MMORPG around, with 70,000 subscribers, fantasy RPG *Runescape* has just entered a new era with the release of *Runescape 2*. A limited free version is available, upgradeable to the full subscription. www.runescape.com
ARIANNE	This is a free collaborative development platform that already has a number of titles coded for it. But the real meat on *Arianne*'s bones is *Marauroa*, a persistent and flexible engine allowing developers to run their own MMO games. http://arianne.sourceforge.net
KINGS OF CHAOS	This MMO strategy game started as a college project but rapidly developed a fanatical following on the Web. Players choose one of four fantasy races and then gain strength and money by recruiting friends into their army. www.centerofchaos.com
CROSSFIRE	An MMO in the *Runescape* mould, with 12 races and 15 professions. There's a comprehensive skill system, but the action is very hack n' slash, adventurers spilling the blood of hundreds of different monsters on many maps. http://crossfire.real-time.com
DAIMONIN	An RPG in the *Crossfire* vein, the similarities are obvious– but subtle differences add extra spice. The player vs player combat packs a definite kick, featuring ultimate death arenas where players duel to the death. http://web2.168180.vserver.de

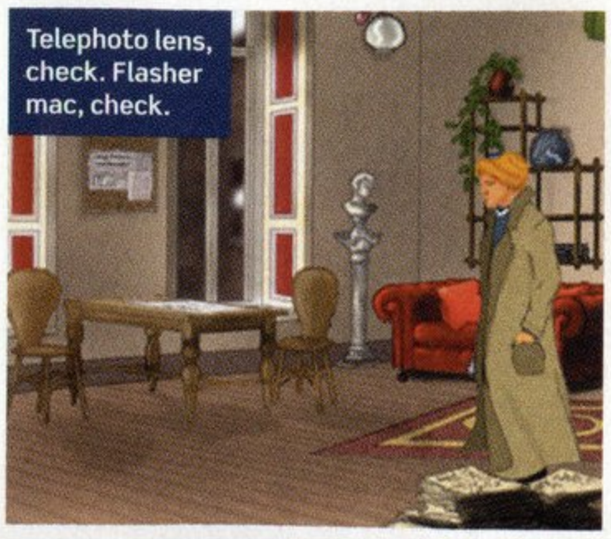
REMAKES

Point *and* Click

The adventure game goes back to its roots

Everyone loves those old adventure games, so much so that people are actively remaking them to run on modern systems. *Maniac Mansion Deluxe* is the best so far.

This remake keeps all the original features of the game, but ports it over to a newer engine that runs on Windows 2000 and XP, with a full 256 colours. It isn't quite *Broken Sword 3*, but it's a free and brilliantly told story.



The same team have also released *The New Adventures of Zak McKracken*, which begins with our hero receiving a letter from Borneo. As he reads the first few lines, he loses control of his face... If you want to know what happens next, both games are on our discs.

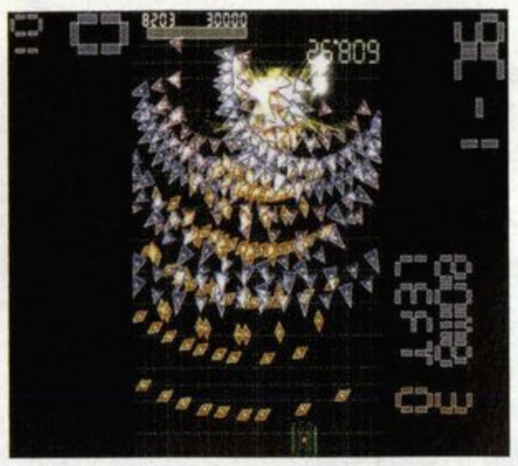
We're also keeping an eye on *Broken Sword 2.5: Return of the Templars* (**www.brokensword25.com**), a German fan-made sequel that perfectly apes the style of the originals, and *Indiana Jones and the Fountain of Youth* (**www.barnettcollege.com**) – classy freeware that hits all the right buttons. Coming to a Downloader near you.

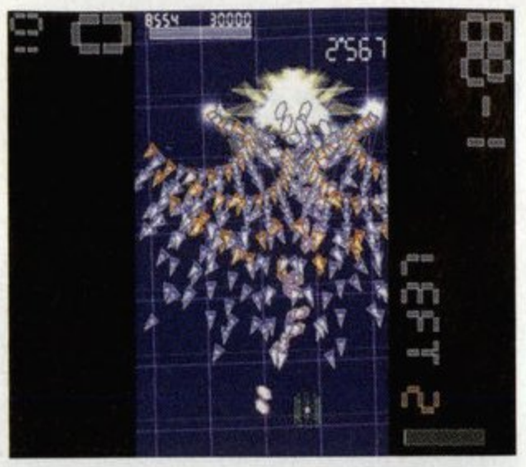
PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

12Mb

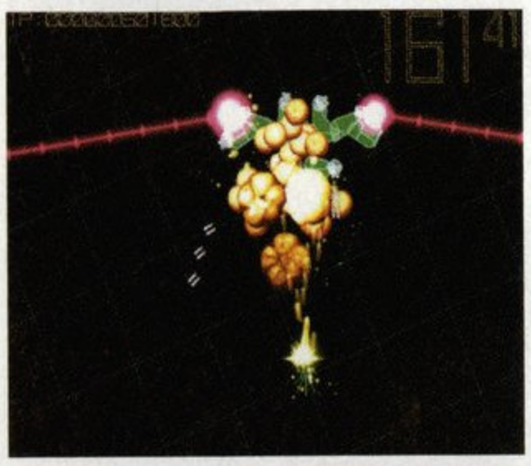
DATA FLOW

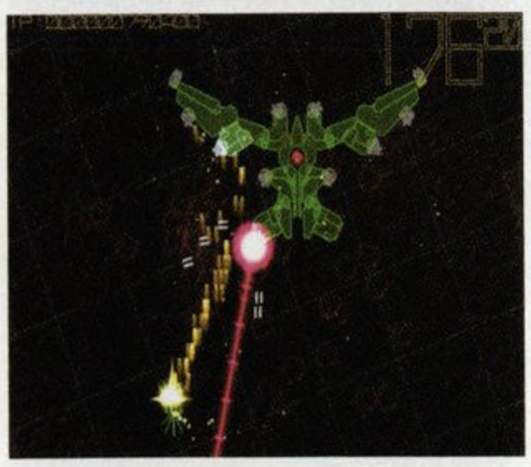
Link	http://bf25.acamar.org/eng/news.php
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	Windows XP/2000
Golden oldies to relight our fire	

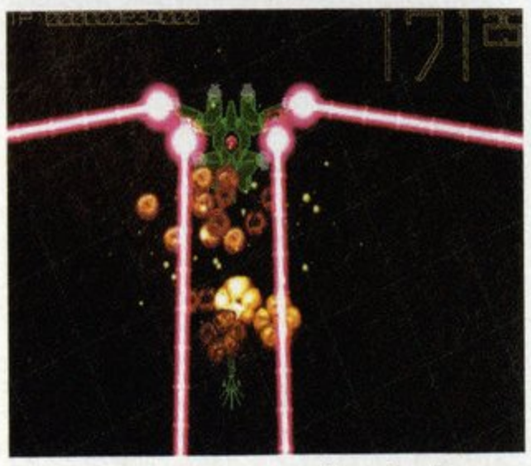




Tumeki Fighters







Warning Forever

Doujin

The Japanese art of freeware

The western freeware scene is dominated by trash, the inventive and well-crafted efforts mostly swamped by the detritus of fools. This makes the Japanese *Doujin* (freeware) scene all the more refreshing, consisting as it does of a small but industrious group of coders constantly striving to raise the creative bar. Most titles follow the traditional Japanese videogame design ethos of a frenetic and fun core, wrapped in a easy-to-play shell.

The thriving ABA Games (**www.asahi-net.or.jp/~cs8k-cyu**) are a prime example of the new Doujin generation. Doujin connoisseur Kenta Cho's most revered releases are two stylishly avant-garde, vertical shoot-em-ups: *Noiz2sa* and *rRootage*. Both strip the lowly shooter down to bare essentials. Hit-boxes are brazenly visible in the centre of uncomplicated enemy designs. Then, in the case of *Noiz2sa*, the game starts throwing complex and just plain trippy bullet patterns at you. The sheer exhilaration of diving head first into a storm of Rainbow Drops, trying to take down a blob of unordered pixels, should be on every gamer's To Do list. *Warning Forever* (**www18.big. or.jp/~hikoza/Prod**) is a similarly honed and beautifully realised vertical shooter, where the player faces boss encounter after boss encounter against the clock.

The Doujin community's expertise is not just restricted to high-quality shooters. As a child of the Japanese game scene, it makes a happy home for the bizarre. Outlandish gems can be found while sifting through beat-'em-ups that specialise in the strange (super-deformed teddy bears fighting large-breasted women, indeed). *Bound Plus* (**www.craftm. net/down.html**) revels in the purity of manoeuvring what can only be described as a bouncy ball around increasingly tricky stage, hooking the player with realistic physics. Returning to ABA Games we also have *Masashikun Hi!* (with the obligatory exclamation mark), an oddball Olympics game I won't even attempt the task of describing (**www.asahi-net.or. jp/~cs8k-cyu/free/mas_e.html**).

Fighting large-breasted women

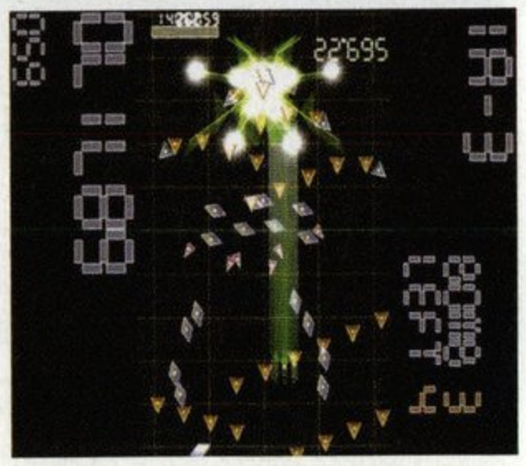
The language barrier is one reason why western gamers have remained oblivious to the existence of Doujin. However, English language websites are slowly but surely waking up: **www.insertcredit.com** and the Doujin-dedicated French/English **www.int13.net/~roni** are the main two.

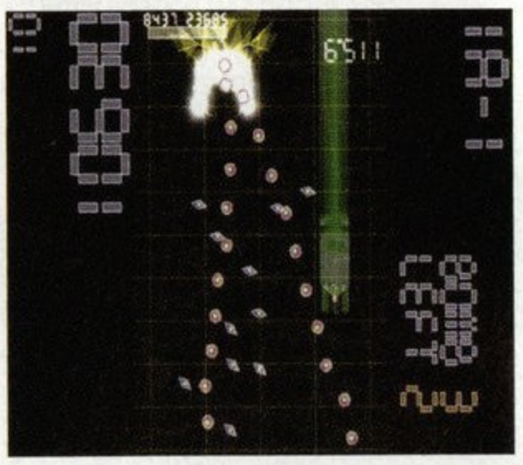
Doujin games are a testament to the versatility of the PC as a games machine. In light of the risk-aversive ethic of the industry, the scene is a shining example of what can be achieved with a little imagination and heart.

BILLY WOOD

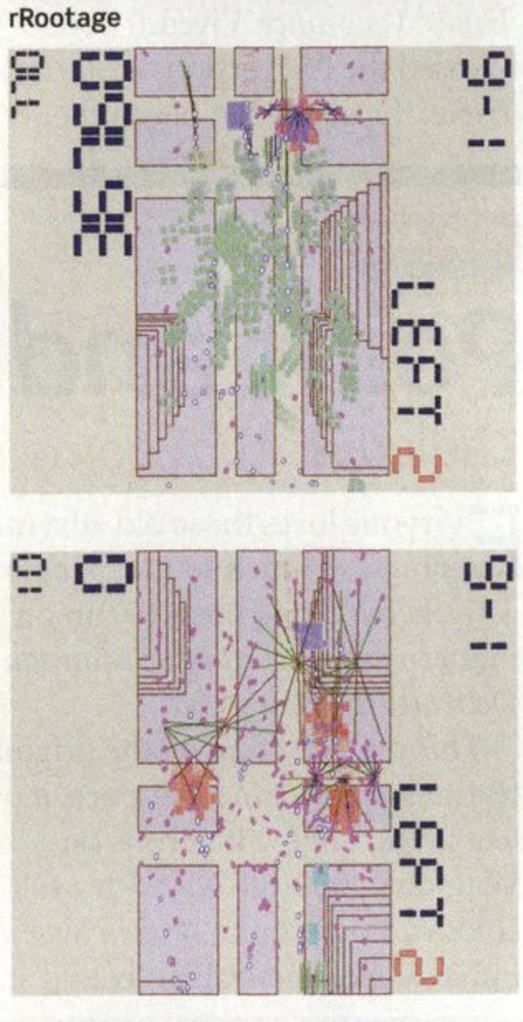
ON THE DISC Three of these Doujin games, for your mindless shooting pleasure > Toolkit, DIY & Extras

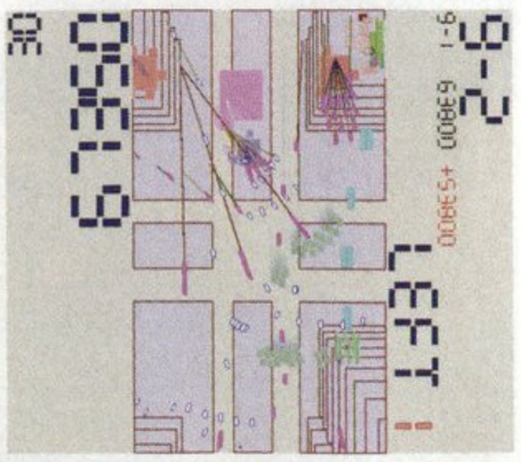
CULTURE JAPANESE RETRO





rRootage





Noiz2sa

GTA: Vice City Mods

Can't wait for *GTA: San Andreas*? Then spice up your *Vice* life...

The best game of 2003 has been blessed with a plethora of user-made mods. These (mostly) small files extend your life crime in many ingenious ways. Everything can be changed from cars, weapons, effects and skins to entire maps.

Some of these mods are tricky to install and require various other bits of software to work properly, but we've picked out a few which use the cunningly simple *Vice City* Mod Manager (VCMM). Just unzip the relevant file to a directory, install it through VCMM, and you're away. Download the VCMM from **www.gtagaming.com**. Check under VCM mods in the left-hand side-bar of the webpage.

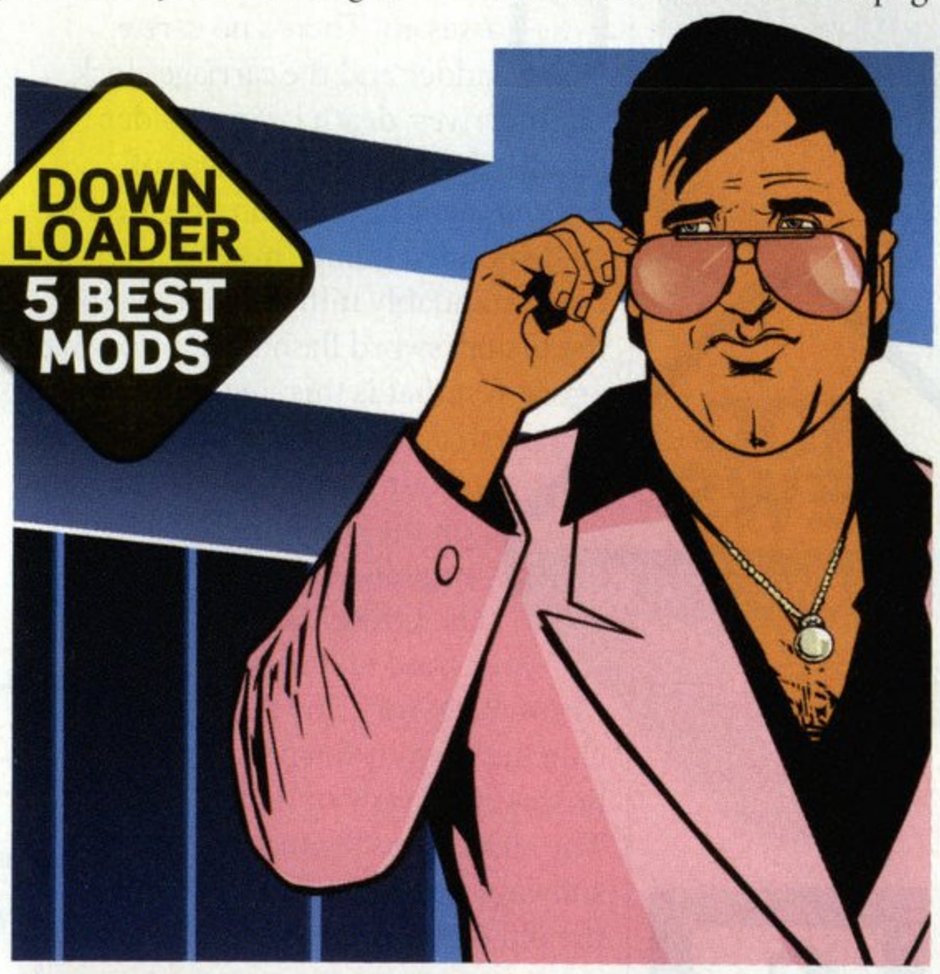
New mods are appearing almost daily, so keep an eye on the industrious fan sites listed here and the months until *San Andreas*' release will pass before you know it.

ROSS ATHERTON

SUZUKI GSXR

■ **By** Luminus ■ **Adds** Suzuki GSXR superbike
■ **Players** 1 ■ **Link** www.gtagaming.com

Riding a fast bike in *Vice City* is the truest test of any made man's skill. Blistering speeds require the reactions of a cobra to avoid big, dumb trucks that turn without warning. But if you think you're pretty sharp on two wheels, try replacing the standard PCJ600 bike with this beautiful Suzuki GSXR. It's a fraction faster than the PCJ, is more detailed and looks much better on the streets.



THE BEST! ULTIMATE VICE CITY

■ **By** Ultimate Vice City team ■ **Adds** Loads!
■ **Players** 1 ■ **Link** www.ultimategta.ca.tc

This is a collection of mods, mostly involving new motors but also a few key map changes. Forty vehicles have been replaced, including various Mercedes, Ferraris and so forth, but our favourite has to be the outsized shopping trolley which replaces the moped. You'll find a new bridge linking the two islands, a Nokia shop, twin Trade Centre towers and altered billboards. As with all the mods, we strongly advise you to back up your saved games before installing UVC.

ASTON V8 VANTAGE

■ **By** Yazu ■ **Adds** Aston Martin V8 Vantage
■ **Players** 1 ■ **Link** www.crappy-mods.com

Driving unbranded cars about can be a bit tedious, which is why the most common mods for *Vice City* add real-world cars. Yazu's effort rewinds the game's '80's feel to a more '70's angular (and very British) style. And the Vantage really is one of our favourite cars. It's tough, powerful and has a healthy top speed. Occasionally we even like to tap in the 'comeflywithme' flying car cheat, and take to the air in a true classic.

CHECKERED SHIRT

■ **By** Justin R ■ **Adds** Snazzy shirt skin
■ **Players** 1 ■ **Link** www.vicepc.com

Bored of Tommy's standard clobber? Try some natty chessboard-inspired threads with this skin which gives you a black-and-white checkered shirt and black trousers (or "pants" as those American types would have it. Perhaps it gives you black pants too. We just don't know. Installing new skins is dead easy: just unzip the file to the Vice City/skins directory and select it with the in-game menu. This will replace Tommy's clothes.

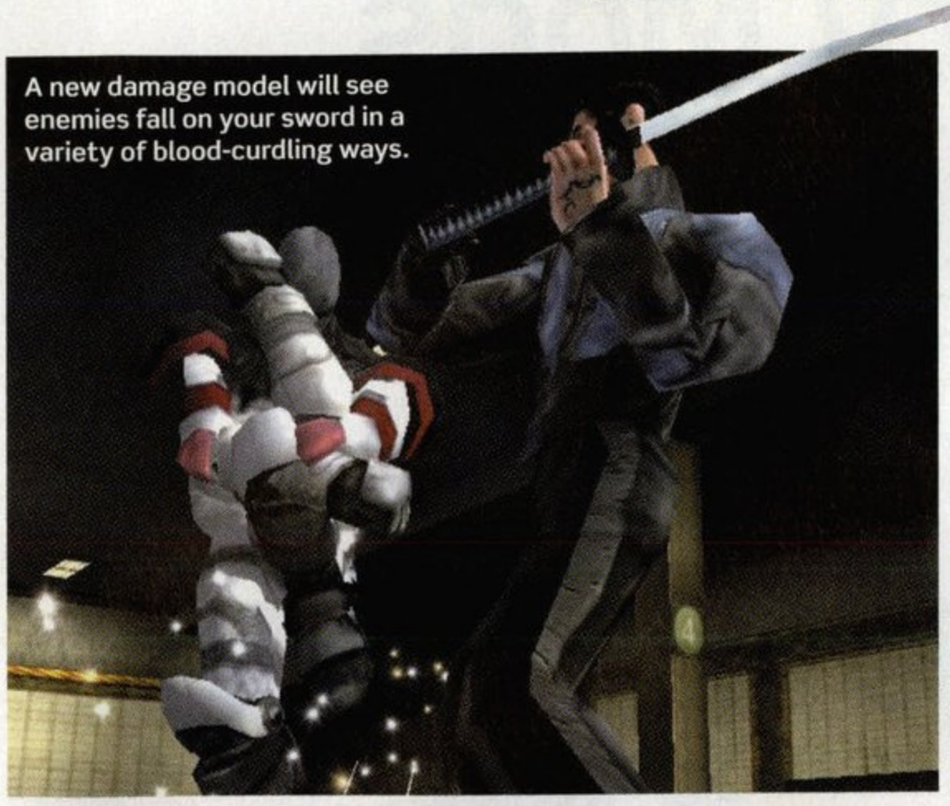
BULLET TRAILS

■ **By** Mike22k ■ **Adds** Laser trails to bullets
■ **Players** 1 ■ **Link** www.gtagaming.com

More of a programming tweak than a mod, this one tags laser trails on to all the bullets fired (yours and theirs). Night-time shoot-outs are particularly spectacular and it always helps to see where you're being shot from. For best effects, unleash the chaingun for a real fireworks display. But remember: don't point a laser at people's eyes, as it can blind them. Fully automatic weapons are much safer.

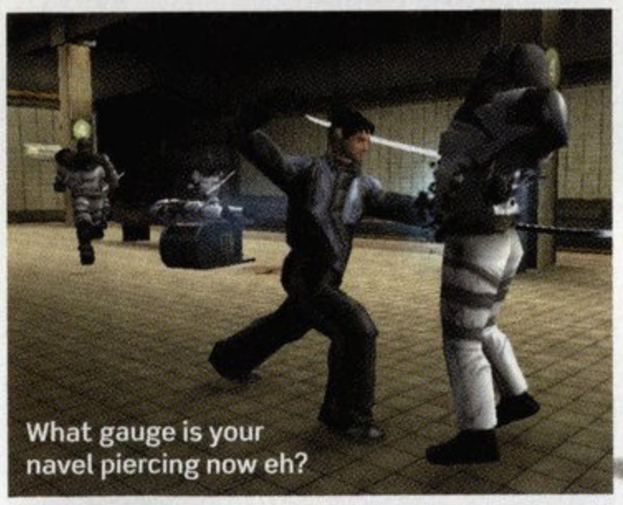
START-UP ›

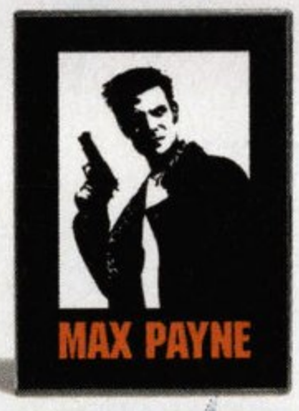
1. Back-up your saved games, then download and install VCMM. Download your mod.
2. If you have the space, make a complete copy of your *Vice City* installation. Better safe...
3. For all VCM-friendly mods, unzip the .vcm file to /mods/vcm in your VCMM folder.
4. Open VCM, install your chosen mod (new cars need to replace old ones, so select one) and go!


A new damage model will see enemies fall on your sword in a variety of blood-curdling ways.

MOD NEWS

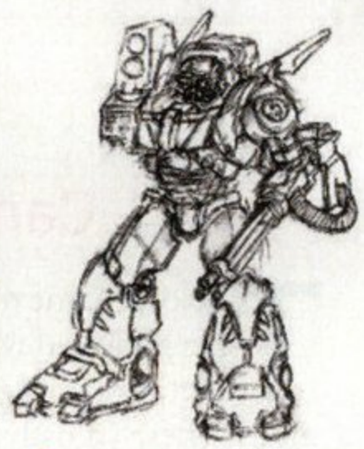
It's the lovechild of *Max Payne* and Kill Bill. Eew.


What gauge is your navel piercing now eh?



MAX PAYNE

Katana



"Die, *Katana*, die!" Oh, hang on a minute...

Once an assassin, always an assassin. There's no career ladder and the carriage clock never arrives; death is your golden handshake. So when the hero of *Katana* turns his back on his career of cold-blooded killing, his employers are understandably miffed. Thus begins the brutal, sword flashing, gib-tossing gore-fest that is this single-player martial arts mod for *Max Payne*.

Your retirement plan sets you on the run from the sinister organisation known only as The Order. There's a price on your head and escape from New York and the clutches of your former bosses is the only option. The chase is on through the subways and catacombs of the old city. Hordes of mercenaries and psychopaths are on your tail, and they only want one thing: to slice the head from your shoulders. For company you keep your two very best friends: kung fu and your trusty blade. Both are required as you litter each of the six levels with limbs and heads, a river of blood spreading in your wake.

Developed by StratonAce, a veteran of the *Max Payne* mod scene, together with newcomer Maddieman, *Katana* takes Remedy's engine and uses it for a third-person beat-'em-up adventure. Influenced by the likes of Akira, Bladerunner and classic Samurai movies like the BabyCart series, *Katana* adopts the combat system of the renowned *Kung Fu* mod for *Max Payne* and ramps up the speed to a frenzy.

"There are brand new combos, as well as the spectacular bullet-time camera effects that accompany them," says Maddieman. "There are some new moves to help you deal with situations where you're surrounded by multiple opponents. For example, some moves cause the enemy to stumble backwards or get knocked into walls, giving the player a slight advantage during the battle."

Shot, stabbed, even sliced in half

The inclusion of a local-area damage system is the biggest improvement to Remedy's code. This not only lets enemies realistically block your attacks, but also ensures each one gets an individual appointment with Dr Death. "It allows for fairly accurate hit-detection," explains Maddieman, "so that enemies can be shot, stabbed, decapitated, dismembered, and even sliced in half."

The majority of these unfortunates are balaclava-clad mercenary grunts, but no martial arts epic would be without boss fights. *Katana* has them in spades. Be it the halberd-swinging mercenary leader Cole or the enigmatic Ninja Marko, titanic battles lie ahead.

Level design is complete and last minute polish is being applied. Look forward to *Katana* very soon.

I am the fashion police, I'm afraid your dorky outfits are a crime!

PCGAMES README

DATA FLOW

Type Single-player

Link http://hellskitchen.paynereactor.com

Percentage complete 90%

From hang-gliders to planes, *Forgotten War* will provide a crucial test of the flexibility of the *Far Cry* engine.

FAR CRY

Forgotten War

That was careless. Allow us to remind you

The traditional run-and-gun FPS is starring down the barrel of termination. Mods like *Forgotten War* for *Far Cry* are getting their kicks elsewhere, coshing the old template, dragging it back to base and contorting into new shapes that are both innovative and exciting. In this case, mixing in RTS ingredients.

The setting is the Korean war, which is an ideal conflict choice for varied maps (you'll be fighting at sea, in the air, through the jungle and across snowy landscapes), and for a tasty selection of weaponry. The first significant jet and chopper engagements occured in Korea, and will figure heavily in this mod, thanks to the *Far Cry* engine.

The malleable CryEngine allows the *Forgotten War* team to create gorgeous environments that can be devastated in the blink of an eye. The system is dubbed 'Live Terrain Manipulation', and enables players to wreck everything from buildings to mountain tops. How will this work in-game? Project lead Eric Peleza sketches a scenario: "A North Korean sniper lies in wait as an American convoy passes, but he's spotted and the radio operator calls in an airstrike. The aircraft swoop in, deliver their payload and we have a clear tree line and no sniper."

Fly my lovelies, fly.

MOD NEWS KOREA ADVICE

The mod's major new game mode, 'Stand Off', will enable both factions to build, capture and destroy bases placed around the map. Base-building will require open space, but happily a few blanket bombings speak volumes when it comes to planning permission.

However, despite intense interrogation, the team are keeping hush on exactly how this RTS mode will pan out.

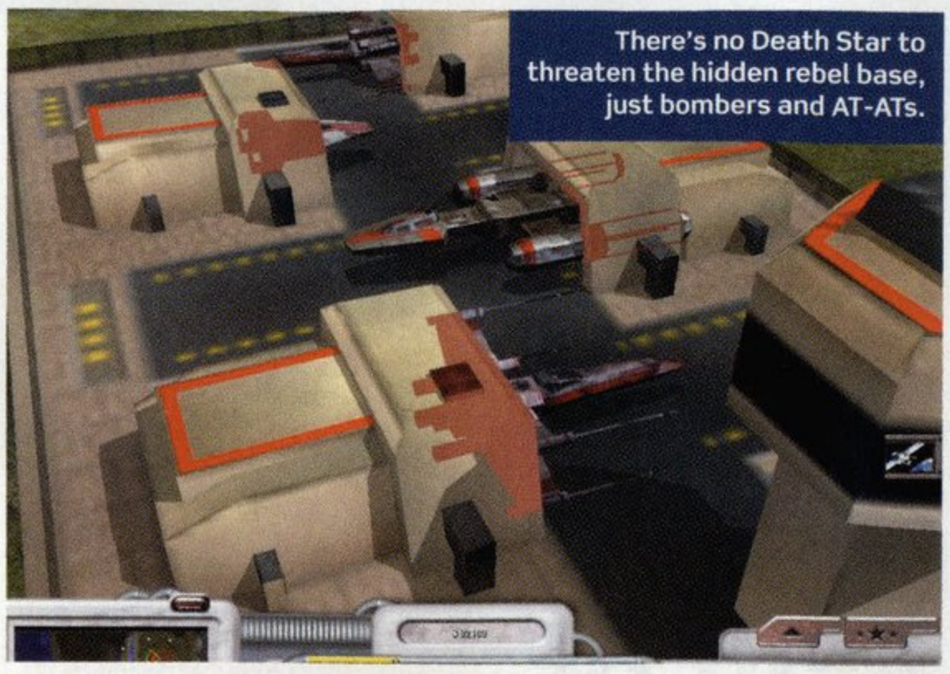
Still, we like the sound of it and the scale of the team's ambition.

Developed in tandem with a *Call of Duty* version, the first public beta of *Forgotten War* for *Far Cry* is scheduled for a summer release.

PCGAMES README

DATA FLOW

Type Multiplayer
Link www.theforgottenwar.com
Percentage complete 40%



There's no Death Star to threaten the hidden rebel base, just bombers and AT-ATs.

C&C GENERALS: ZERO HOUR

Imperial Assault

Empire building with *C&C*

Star Wars meets *Command & Conquer*. It's a match made in heaven, or maybe a distant moon of Naboo. This long overdue mod promises four factions to play with – the Rebel Alliance and Galactic Empire from the classic trilogy, plus the Grand Army of the Republic and the Separatists from the Clone Wars. Each side gets three character generals and a whole range of familiar vehicles and units, including AT-ATs, TIE Bombers and X-Wings. Meanwhile the maps aim to recreate every planet in the saga.

Imperial Sith troops will be able to seize control of rebel forces with dark Force powers, while Jedi Knights have the ability to boost the firepower of surrounding units. "They'll gain opportunities for upgrades, and additional force powers like Force Push and Force Lightning," says project lead Edan Dover. Expect the first public beta later this winter or early spring.

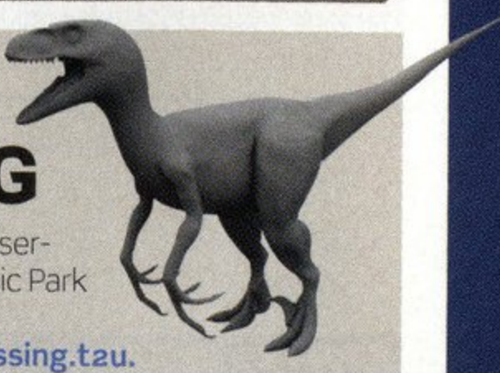
PCGAMES README

DATA FLOW

Type Single and multiplayer
Link www.planetcnc.com/imperialassault
Percentage complete 65%

FAR CRY

TRESPASSING



The moment we saw *Far Cry* and its user-friendly toolset we just knew a Jurassic Park mod would be in the offing. This is it.

The official website (**www.trespassing.t2u.com**) includes a full back-story telling the tale of Jonathan Korn, a genetics expert hired by International Genetic Technologies (INGEN) to explore the Isle of Nublar. All seems well as Korn and his two colleagues embark on the second day of monitoring a docile Brachiosaurus herd. Then the predators attack.

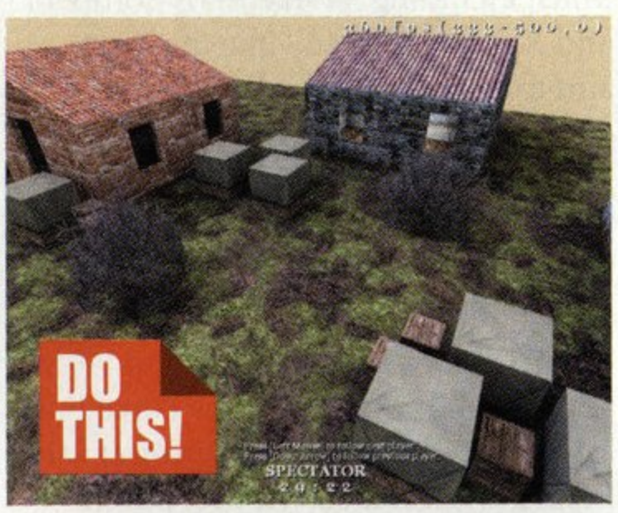
Armed with just a machinegun, binoculars and a map of the islands, Korn must somehow get off the island alive. The team plan to include land and sea vehicles, and a random range of beasts each time you play. Expect it to rear its head this autumn.

How to build a multi-player *Call of Duty* map

BY ADAM GASCOINE

D-I-Y

A simple mod job you can do at the weekend



WHAT WILL IT TAKE?

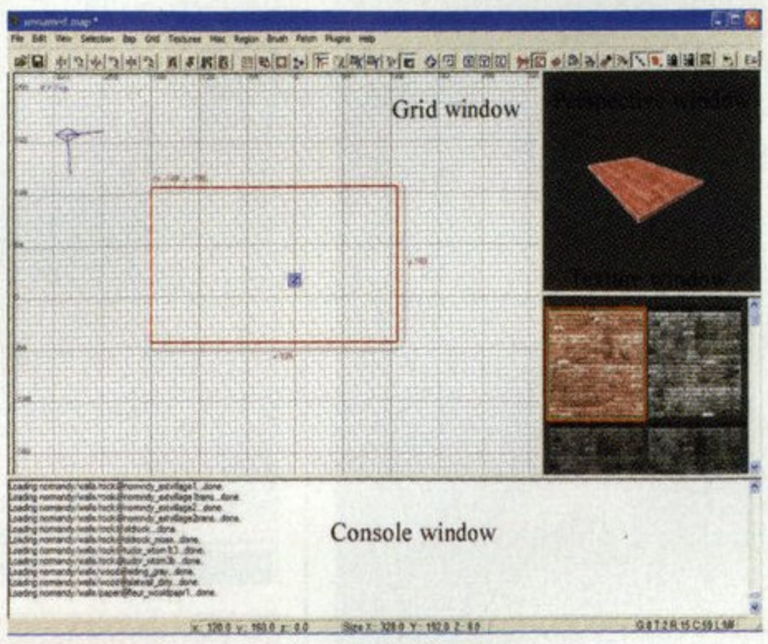
Skill Piece-a-cake
Time About 3-4 hours

WHAT WILL I NEED?

- A copy of *Call of Duty* **www.callofduty.com**
- Extra notes, the map itself and the *CoD* map compiler: **on the disc**
- *CoD* mapping tools (CoDRadiant) **www.filefront.com**

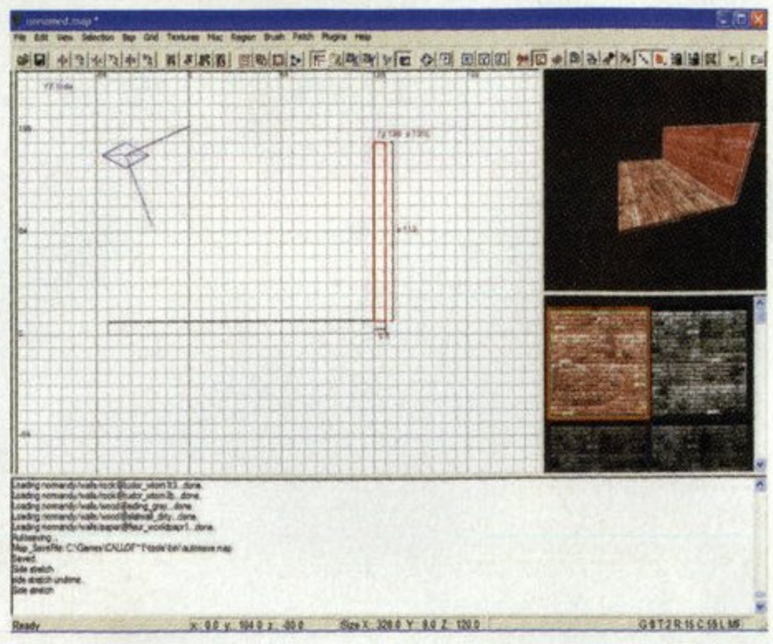
PCGAMES RESOURCE HARVESTER

- **Mapping forums and compiler links**
  www.iwnation.com/Forums
- **Tutorials and forums**
  www.modtheater.com/forum/forumdisplay.php?f=75
- **Online model viewer**
  http://bzflag.free.fr/cod/index.php?l=o&u=a
- **Other maps**
  www.codfiles.com
- **Mapping forums**
  http://dynamic4.gamespy.com/%7Emap/callofduty



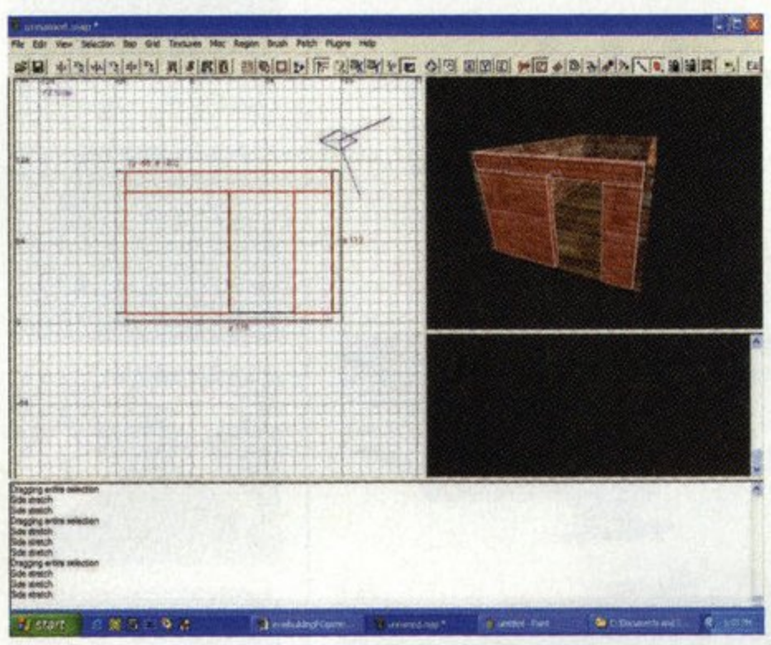
01 THE FIRST BRUSH

From the CoDRadiant textures menu, select Normandy/walls. Click on the first texture. Make sure your grid window is in 'top' view (Ctrl + Tab to switch). Left click and drag on the grid. Draw out a square that measures 320 by 192. You now have a 'brush' that will be your floor. In the perspective window, move the camera to see the brush. You can move the camera by right clicking in the perspective window and dragging the mouse.



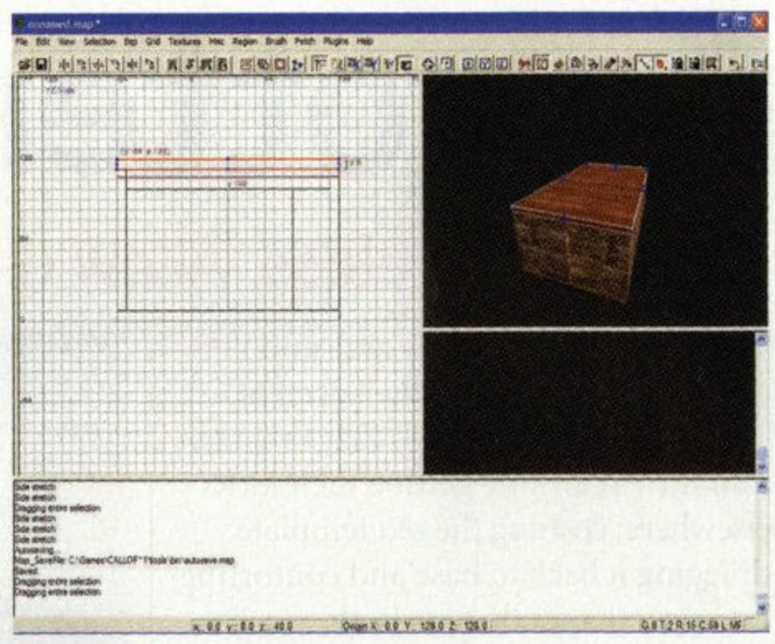
02 A ROOM WITH NO VIEW

To reselect a brush at any time, Shift + left click it. Press Escape to deselect everything. Let's draw a wall. Ctrl + Tab to cycle the grid view to 'YZ side'. Draw a brush that's 8 units thick and 112 units high. Move the wall so that it meets the floor by left clicking inside the selected brush and dragging the mouse. If you left click outside of the selected brush, you'll be able to resize it. Make sure the wall and the floor are flush.



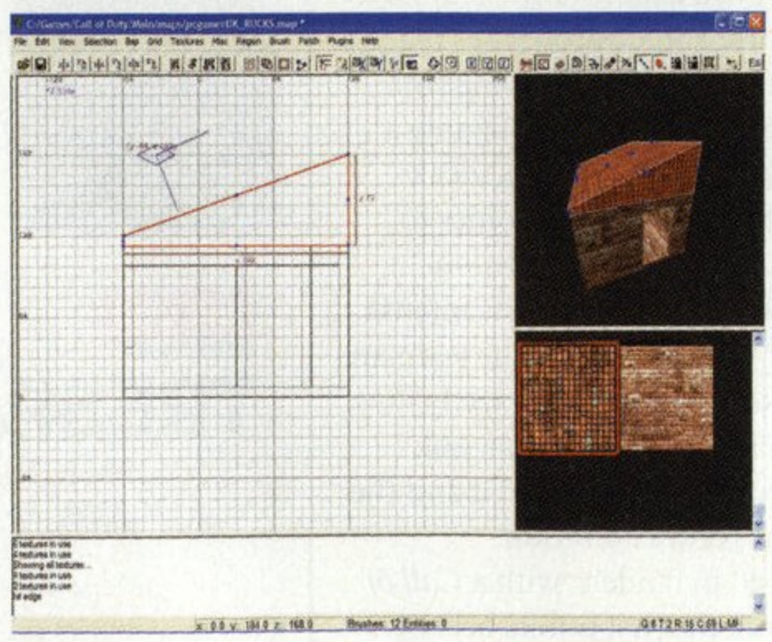
03 DOORS AND FLOORS

Build the other walls and align them with the floor. You'll see we've added a new floor texture to make the room look more realistic. The texture menu categorises each texture set for you, so it should be easy to find something appropriate. We've also left an opening for a door: you can see this doorway was formed by three separate brushes. The doorway measures 96 units high by 56 units wide, which is plenty of room for a player to get through.



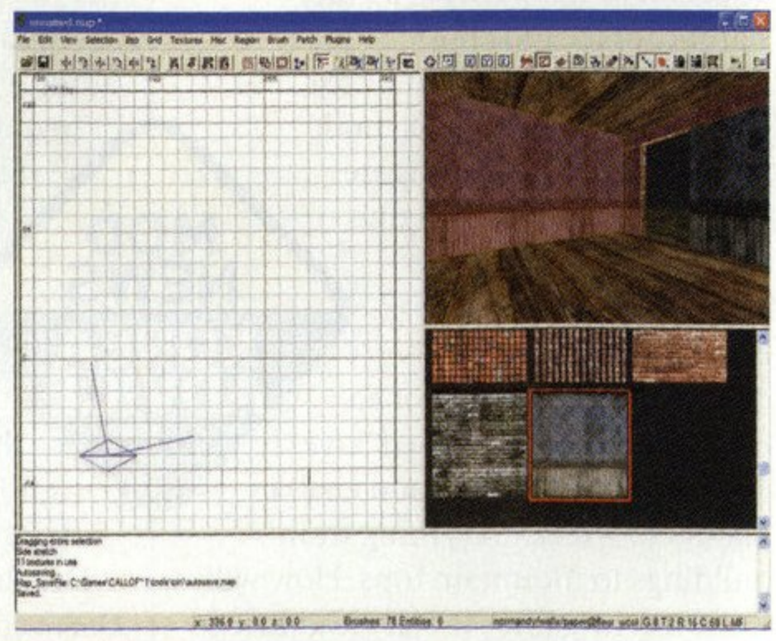
04 GIMME SHELTER

For the roof, we need to do some edge manipulation. We'll also use this step to learn how to copy a brush. Our floor happens to be the same size we want our roof to be, so we'll copy it. Select the floor brush by Shift + left clicking on it, then press the Space bar. This will clone the floor brush, and automatically select your new copy. Move this new brush up so it's flush with the top of your walls, then press E to turn on the edge manipulation tool.



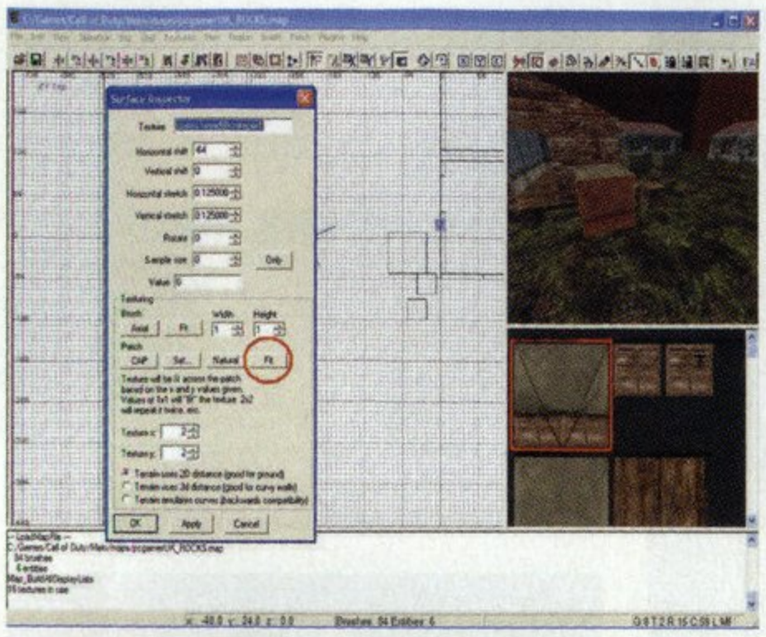
05 A NEW ANGLE

Before we shape the roof, let's give it the right texture. From the textures menu, go to Normandy/roof, then select the first texture in the new set. Your roof brush is still selected, so the new texture will automatically be applied to it. Now left click and drag one of the upper corner blue dots. This 'handle' will stretch out one side of the brush, allowing you to give your roof a slant. Once you're happy, deselect everything by pressing Escape.



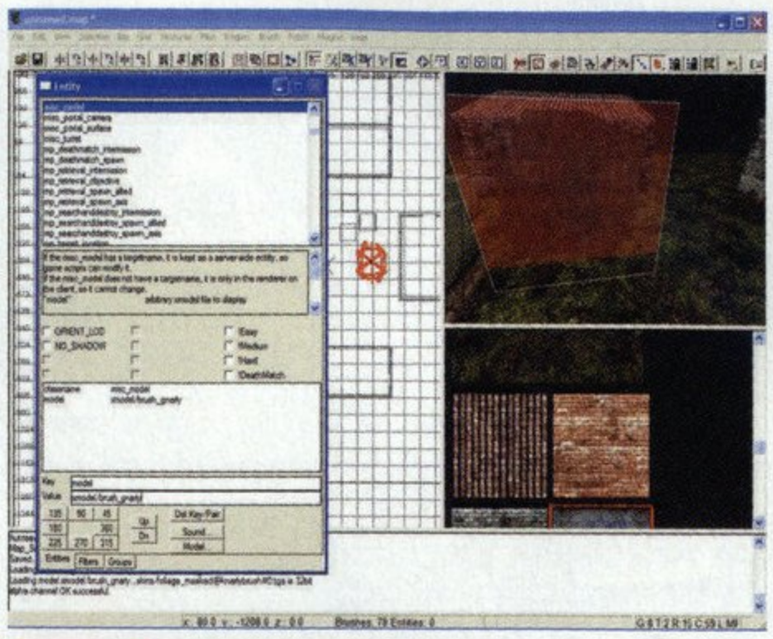
06 FACE FRONT, SOLDIER

The roof tiles look good on top, but the sides should have the wall texture. We need to apply textures to individual faces of the brush. Ctrl + Shift + left click on the side of your roof brush. You'll see it highlights one face in the perspective view. You can now apply your red brick texture. Do this for all faces on the roof brush except the top. You can also change the texture inside the room using this method. We've chosen a wallpaper found in Normandy/walls.



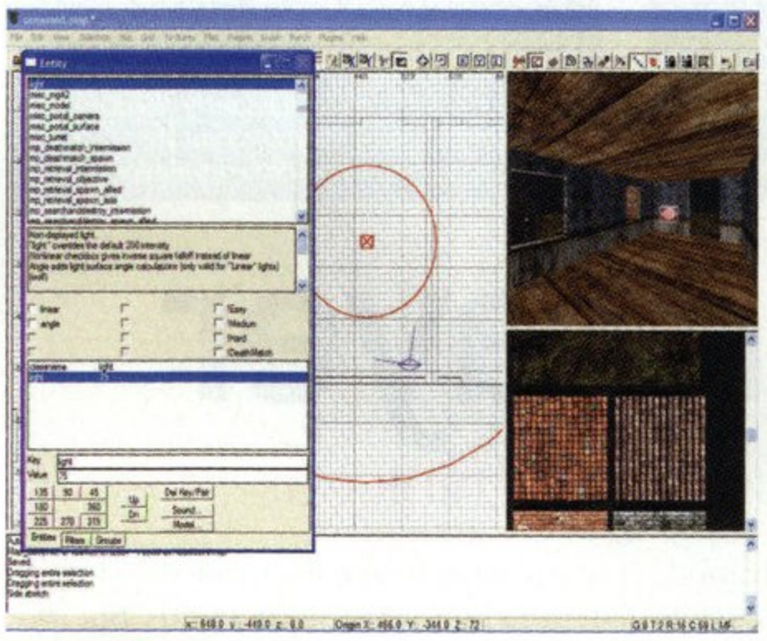
07 EMPIRE EXPANSION

Add ground level brushes outside your room to expand the level. We've added a grass texture, and also placed some simple square boxes as crates. Open the Surface Inspector, by selecting a face then pressing the S key, and the 'Fit' option (circled) will fit the texture to the selected face – very handy for boxes and crates. Fill out your level a little, adding new houses with more doors and windows to make the map more varied, similar to the map pictured here.



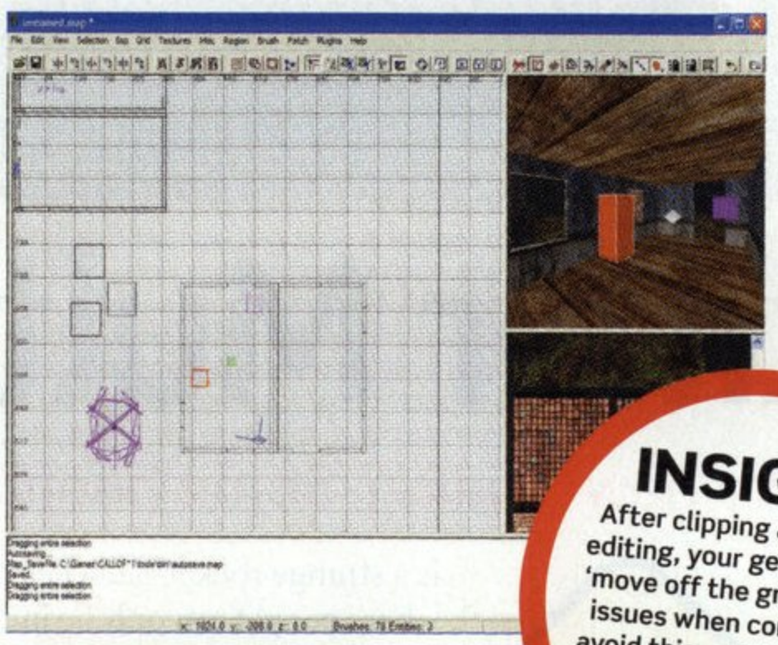
08 SUPERMODELS AT YOUR DISPOSAL

Deselect everything, then right click in the grid view. From the menu, select Misc, then Model. In the dialogue box that appears, select Any File as we'll need to manually add the model name anyway. In the entity box that appears, leave the 'key' field as model, and change the 'value' field to the name of the model you want to add. For now, type in 'xmodel/brush_gnarly'. You'll see a dead bush appear.



09 SHEDDING SOME LIGHT ON THE ISSUE

Deselect everything, right click on the grid view, and from the pop-up menu choose 'light' to add a light entity to the level. Pressing 'N' will show the entity info box so you can adjust certain properties. For now, just change the light value to 75, as the default 300 is very bright. This light entity will be invisible in the game, but will cast a beam from it's centre. Place several lights around your map.

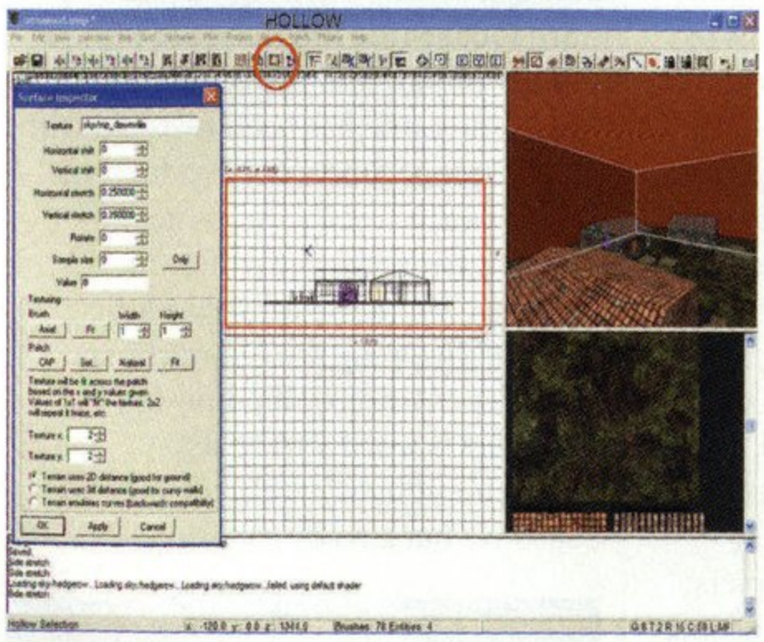


10 SPAWN OF THE DEVIL

Right click in the grid view, and select MP, then deathmatch_spawn. This red block represents where your player will start. You'll need several of these, slightly above the floor and not intersecting any brushes. Also put in a deathmatch _intermission for the camera position when the map first loads, and team deathmatch spawns and intermissions.

INSIGHT

After clipping and terrain editing, your geometry can 'move off the grid', causing issues when compiling. To avoid this, set your grid size to 1, select all of your brushes, then press Ctrl + G.



11 DON'T STEP OFF THE EDGE

You need to enclose your map in order to make it playable. The quickest way to do this is to draw a brush that's larger than your map in all dimensions, then select the 'hollow' icon on the toolbar (circled). This will create a hollow box, commonly called a 'skybox'. To add a sky texture, press S for surface properties, and in the texture field, type sky/ mp_dawnville (you'll only see a red and black texture in Radiant). You can add some perimeter scenery later.

12 SAVE YERSELVES

Save your map in your Call of Duty/main/maps folder. It's now ready to be 'compiled' into a Bsp file. The easiest way to do this is to find a community-made compiler such as CoDpiler to do it for you. These compilers will build the level, and even allow you to automatically start the level in-game once it's completed. Refer to the compiler's documentation for complete instructions. And that's it. For you, Tommy, the map is over.

Design Law Debunked

Not a rule "The game must be fun"

Dave Morris is lead designer at Elixir

Maybe you think of games as toys, maybe as entertainment. Maybe you even think of them as art. Or all three. Whatever, we'd all agree that they are supposed to be fun, right? The things you do in a game should always be fun. There's no point in interactions that waste your time with tedious, boring or pointless tasks.

In other words, the game itself should never get in the way of your enjoyment.

Yeah, of course. Naturally. Goes without saying.

Except...

Think how much playing time in a RPG like *Dungeon Siege* is spent book-keeping. I spent more time organising the contents of my backpack in that game than I ever spent on my real-life financial affairs. Or how about *Darkstone*? That town square looked ever so pretty with its neat little rows of potions blue and red, big and small. The selection of maces and swords that I carefully set out in order of killing power. The spare armour that – who knows – might just come in handy one day.

Boring? Bloody mind-numbing! But it serves a purpose. While you are obsessively testing and arranging all that gear, trying to fit a four-square polearm into the three squares left on your inventory, your subconscious is ticking away at the game problems. You know, the way it suddenly hits you in the middle of spring cleaning that you realised how to get the three gems from the spider-god shrine? Thank goodness for tedium.

Doctors only treat obsessive-compulsive disorder if the patient himself considers it to be affecting his quality of life. For heroic adventurers OCD is a positive asset. The true heroes of high fantasy worlds wouldn't be Conan, they'd be Nigel from accounts.

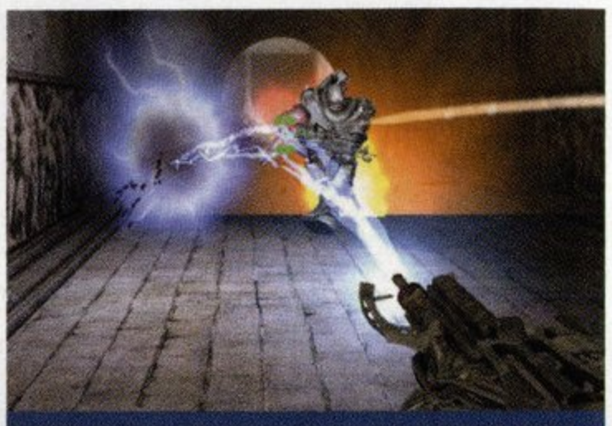
Which reminds me. Might still be time as you read this to get your ISA sorted. Unless you're too busy with that collection of mana potions.

■ **This design column regularly appears in game development trade journal Develop**

Want to write a mod tutorial for PC GAMES ADDICT? Then contact:

dan@derwenthoward.com.au

Smile, you're on PCGA camera. We don't care if your mouth was surgically replaced with a steel plate. Smile, damn you.



The action is fast and furious, especially on the smaller maps. But aside from the effects, brown and grey are the dominant colours.

...Aside from this chap, obviously. Stop indoctrinating us with your crypto-communist sympathies, you developers.

Painkiller Multiplayer

Could it be the new *Quake*? Some people seem to think so

Painkiller multiplayer has managed to get itself on the list for the next CPL (Cyberathlete Professional League), with a US$50,000 prize up for grabs. But is money the only reason to get good at it?

Well it's like this: *Painkiller*'s multiplayer is easy to get to grips with and tough to master. No surprise there then, since all hardcore FPS games are now tricky terrain for all but the most determined. It's also been blatantly skewed towards a *Quake*-loving audience. There's much here to suggest that originality has been sidestepped in favour of familiar methods of play.

The level design is bland and unexceptional, giving players little to learn, although movement takes some time to master and could soon be expected to be a 'trick' art, as we've seen in, um, *Quake*. This is all about fast movement, flick-shot accuracy and timing the power-ups. The multiplayer modes are uninteresting, although we're expecting some kind of capture the flag mode to be modded pretty soon. The 'People Can Fly' game mode is a strange rocket-launcher-only mod where people can only be injured while they're off the ground. It's fun for a moment, but not the kind of dynamic that's likely to stick in the collective imagination.

LONG PLAY MULTIPLAY TRIAL

Played by
Jim Rossignol
Played for
36 hours

The strangest element is that the default weapon, the stake gun, is a kind of mini-railgun, although without the immediacy. It's tough to use and quite deadly at close range, which seems to make little sense, given the overall balance of weapons. It also goes 'click-thunk' - an entirely unsatisfying noise. It does, however, mean that *Painkiller* is a relentlessly ferocious deathmatch experience. The rocket launcher is just right, sending gibs splattering across gothic courtyards in a most pleasing manner. Players who master the weapons are going to find themselves lording it over levels the same way *Quake* champs do on newbie servers.

Playing *Painkiller*, there is a niggling sense that this is a *Quake* wannabe. Indeed, the developers are *supposed* to be Quakeheads. So, rather than create a game type of their own, are they attempting to ape the game they love? It's obvious why they'd do this, but it doesn't really work. Problems like lag, and lack of refinement, make this the kind of experience we were hoping had come to an end in 1999.

In all honesty there's nothing here that really sets *Painkiller* apart from the crowd, a crowd above which *UT2004* and *Quake III* are still towering. The third Quake title might be old but the fluidity of play and the acute degree to which the game has been tweaked with OSP (Orange Smoothie Productions – a mod which tweaks the game for tournament play) and others means that the CPL were probably a little hasty in dropping the old warhorse from the championship line-up. If *Painkiller* is worthy to be its replacement then... well, consider our collective hat already eaten.

PCGAMES README

DATA FLOW

First review	PCGA 22, 85%
Why now?	It's on the CPL list of pro games
Worth a play for sure, but it's hardly a *Quake* replacement, and miles behind *UT2004*.	

■ **Publisher** Dreamcatcher ■ **Developer** People Can Fly ■ **Requires** PIII 600, 256Mb RAM, 3D card ■ **Multiplayer** LAN or internet with up to 16 players
■ **Link** www.painkillergame.com ■ **Community** www.hellhunter.tk ■ **Influenced by** Quake III

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FAX: 02-9879 5388	FAX: 03-9763 8400	FAX: 08-9242 8688	FAX: 08-8347 0466	FAX: 07-3856 1777	FAX: 64-9-634 8078

CASEMOD

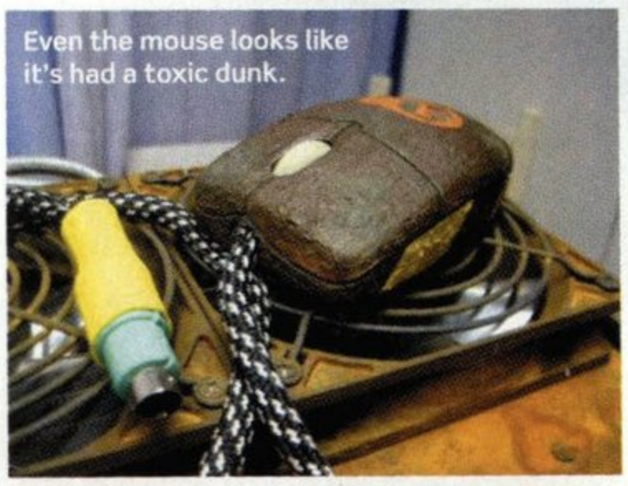
Crowbar not included

A *Half-Life* dream machine

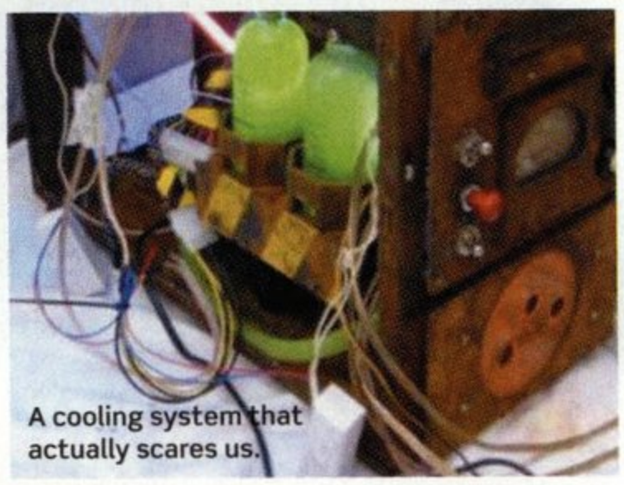
Build it, they say, and the game will come. At least, that's the thinking behind the item on the right – just about the most impressive PC case mod we've ever seen. It's the creation of Piloux of the bit-tech.net forums. Based around *Half-Life 2* concept art, the case includes a 'toxic' fluorescent water cooling system and a gorgeously corroded, weathered paint job, inspired by the dank Black Mesa complex. There's even a textured mouse and damaged keyboard to complete the package.

A top effort, but we're concerned its owner may cop more radiation from their case than their screen!

■ http://forums.bit-tech.net



Even the mouse looks like it's had a toxic dunk.



A cooling system that actually scares us.

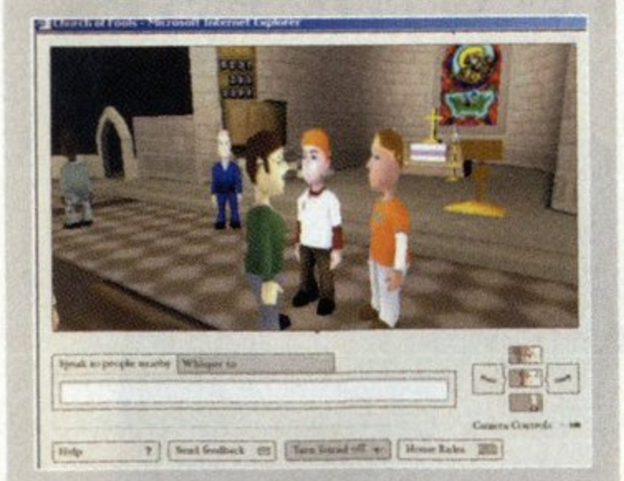
Hey hey, hey now now, sing this corrosion to me.

CULTURE

PC case modding, Black Mesa style

RELIGION

PLEASE PULL UP A PEW



The world's first 3D internet chapel opened on May 11. It attracted 41,000 visitors within the first week, including believers, non-believers, the curious and the occasional heckling Satanist.

The Church of Fools is an experiment in online worship, sponsored by the Methodist Church, and run by Christian activist group Ship of Fools. The group say: "If you go back to Jesus, he said, 'where two or three people gather in my name, I'm there in the midst of them.' We believe that the net offers people the chance for genuine meetings and true community, even when the people involved never get to meet each other face to face."

■ www.churchoffools.com

What's happening in your gaming world?
Tell us your tales of gaming wonder...
pcga@derwenthoward.com.au

SCIENCE

RoboCTF

Capture the flag trains robots

Boffins at the University of South Florida have taken to testing the latest robot controller software using a classic PC game mode: Capture the Flag. But this is a match with a lot more at stake than online gaming glory – the winners get to mould the next generation of robo-life.

CTF serves as a useful model for real world situations, according to Andrew Nelson, the researcher responsible for making robots fight. "The game serves as something of a benchmark task for low-level robot learning because it entails various abilities such as navigation, object avoidance, and object homing. This work can be applied to develop components or modules of larger control systems used in autonomous robots. For example, the Capture the Flag game is very similar to a number of target search behaviours such as clearing a mine field or searching for heat sources in a collapsed building."

Just don't give them rocket launchers, OK?

Now if they can just learn how to make minature rocket launchers, companies like Tamiya have a whole new market to explore...

WHAT'S ON BOARD?

- Treaded radio controlled toy bases
- Differential drive system
- CCD video camera
- Custom manufactured PC boards running x86 processors,
- 802.11b wireless cards
- Weaponry options available

Real Lives

And you thought you had it bad

As a gamer, I've gotten used to disparaging remarks about video games. Sure, there are studies that show some videogames boost visual acuity, hand-eye coordination, and problem-solving skills, but you could reason that Jenga has similar effects.

But what about games that challenge us to be compassionate? Open-minded? Philosophical? *Real Lives 2004* (**www.educationalsimulations.com**) is one of the new 'serious games' for purposes beyond entertainment, and it's certainly hypnotically involving and informative.

Designed by Bob Runyan, a high-school mathematics and social science teacher, *Real Lives* simulates a complete lifespan from birth. The catch is, you can be born anywhere on earth.

Playing for a few hours, I went through several of the apparently billions of lives possible: a Guatemalan soldier who died an old, wealthy land-owner blinded by cataracts; a brilliant Japanese girl whose family decided to send her brothers to university, but not her; a charitable Albertan farmer suffering from asthma due to smoking in his formative years; a pretty Egyptian woman who was raped when she was 16, became a political activist, and was executed at age 44.

As you can tell, *Real Lives* is atypical of most video games. It can be a grim, but elegiac reminder of life beyond our borders. And what's horrifyingly realistic is how little control it hands over to the player. Gamers are accustomed to having absolute command over their digital personas and environment, but the interaction here focuses on life-altering choices, practical and often ethical. One of my characters – an American woman living in poverty in Atlanta, Georgia – was hit by her husband and was offered the choice to leave him, tell the authorities, hit back, or do nothing.

There is, quite literally, a whole world of pain out there.

CULTURE GAME OF LIFE

Game Author
Bob Runyan
Profile
Educational Simulations was formed to create educational games for the classroom. The team includes former US PeaceCorps member Bob Runyan, Medard Gabel, author of a series of books on world finance, and Jim Waler, marketing.

You can decide how you invest your money (if you have any), how you spend your free time, whether to abort a child or put it up for adoption and hundreds of other choices. But it's when *Real Lives* takes away your control that it really hits you. Like when my character's father died of a heart attack, forcing the 65-year-old mother to barter junk picked up off the roads in order to support her family.

Illnesses and atrocities occur with a frequency related to the country you were born in. Backed by a data engine which culls statistics from over a hundred sources (including Amnesty International, the World Health Organisation, and the CIA Fact Book), *Real Lives* justifies its elements of tragedy and includes web links for almost every facet of your country.

It's hard to believe this is a video game. It it entertaining? Sort of. Is it enlightening? Beyond any doubt.

FAUSTUS SALVADOR

ALAS POOR YORICK

■ **Sarawono Setiaji** *Born Lampung Province, Indonesia*
Sarawono worked as a subsistance farmer, barely growing enough to eat. He was divorced at 25, but remarried at 42. Plagued by malaria and alcoholism, he died of an opportunistic infection, brought on by his weakened state. He leaves behind two daughters.

■ **Ajibayo Dosou** *Born Ilorin, Nigeria*
Ajibayo was stunted at birth from inadequate protein. He died from measles, aged three.

■ **James Taylor** *Born Dundee, UK*
James left school without any qualifications. He started smoking, aged 14, while working as an odd-job man. He died alone, aged 71, from diabetes.

ON THE DISCS You can find a trial version of Bob Runyan's unsettling game of life. Look for it in > Demos.

START-UP >

1. Install the *Real Lives* client from your coverdisc to your hard-drive.
2. Start the game by double-clicking on the icon on your desktop. Yup it's that simple.
3. *Real Lives* offers you some randomly generated characters to play with...
4. ...However, you can also create your own using the built-in character generator.

BEAUTY CONTEST

Miss Galaxies

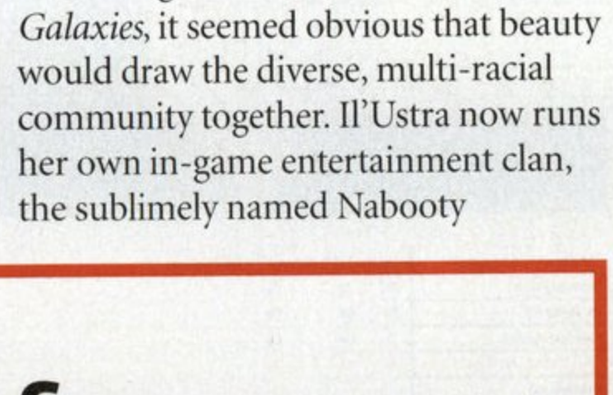
From walking carpet to beauty queen

Sta'Ry has it all. Long, flowing dark hair, legs that stretch for miles, charm like a laser gun, a laser gun. She is a true vision of beauty. She's also a Wookiee.

Her life in *Star Wars Galaxies* changed forever the day her true beauty was acknowledged. The day she won the Miss Galaxies 2004 contest. Sta'Ry beat off opposition from across the cosmos to walk away with the crown from an extraordinary in-game event, created and organised by the players of LucasArts' MMORPG.

The beauty contests are the brainchild of Rebecca, or Aktrez Il'Ustra as she is known throughout the galaxy. A veteran of real life beauty pageants in the US since the age of 4, Il'Ustra first introduced the idea of in-game contests in *Anarchy Online*. "I saw the opportunity to bring my real life passion into the online world. The outfits available in the game and the extensive use of emotes made it very easy for me to bring what I had learned from competing in the real world."

CULTURE
LOVELY LADIES



Turning her attentions to *Star Wars Galaxies*, it seemed obvious that beauty would draw the diverse, multi-racial community together. Il'Ustra now runs her own in-game entertainment clan, the sublimely named Nabooty Entertainment. She has also just been snapped up in real life to work on a competing MMORPG. The beauty game has changed her life.

Il'Ustra's first Miss Galaxy pageant took place on her home server Eclipse back in October 2003. More than 80 female Twi'leks, humans and Wookiees made up the bevy of beauties, competing in preliminary contests for the right to represent their planet on a galactic level. Six finalists were eventually selected and, on the grand stage at Vreni Island on Corellia, with members of the *Galaxies* development team among the judges, a young Bothan named Aema was crowned as the first Miss Galaxies.

Such an accolade isn't easily won. There are four rigorous rounds of judging (See 'Getting under the fur', left), but with so many shapes and sizes to accommodate, the emphasis is on personality and talent, not looks. "It's the person behind the pixels that we are most interested in," says Il'Ustra.

This year's contest proved an equally big success but, from the start, one contestant stood out from the crowd. OK, so she was seven foot tall but there were other reasons. "From the moment I met Sta'Ry I knew she had winning potential. She was in the event for the

JUDGING

Getting under the fur

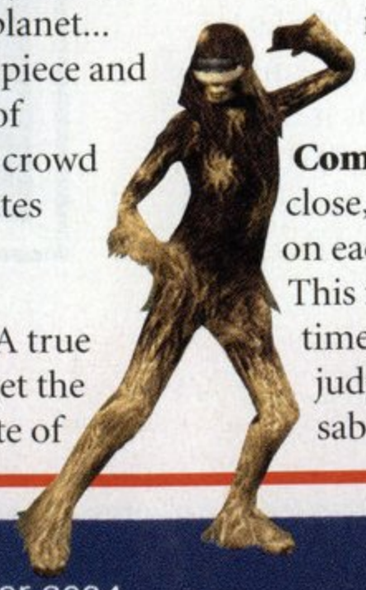
How the judges find your inner beauty

Evening Gown (Worth 10%) A chance for our ladies to get dressed up in their best clobber. Not the kind of gear you'd wear down the cantina on a Friday night, we're talking about that dress you've been saving for a special occasion – like the day Sony Online fix the damn vehicle repair bug for example. Sorry, just had to get that one off our chests.

Swimsuit (Worth 10%) Perhaps the most controversial round of all. Humans and Twi'leks love the opportunity to flash the flesh, clearly enjoying an advantage over the other races. For the Wookiee, it is of course a complete nightmare. There just isn't enough bikini wax on the planet... Contestants don their one-piece and must stick to a set pattern of walking while working the crowd with the best string of emotes they can muster.

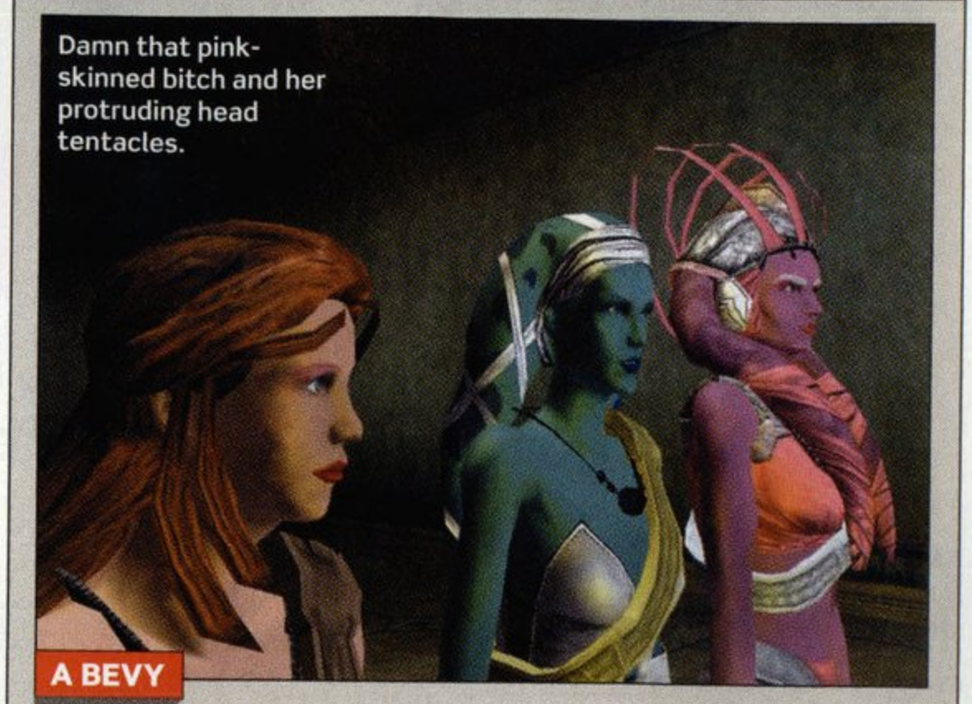
Talent (Worth 30%) A big one. A true Miss Galaxies should be able to get the washing out of the way and a plate of Meatlump on the table for her man before he gets home from Rancor-hunting. Oh no, hold on, not that kind of talent. You should be good at dancing, playing an instrument or duelling. Yeah, that's right. The important stuff. You only get two minutes to impress the judges, so if you're thinking of grinding Armoursmith, think again.

The Interview (Worth 40%) The crucial round. If you've flunked a dance move or shown a nipple in previous rounds you can win it all back here. Contestants are asked a single question from the judges and you're judged not only on your answer but also the personality that comes shining through. A few funnies involving Jawas walking into cantinas never go amiss.



Composite (10%) The contest draws to a close, as each judge makes a final judgement on each girl, scoring them out of ten overall. This is often the tie-breaker so it's a good time to get your bribes in, or flash the judges a crafty wink and the offer of a little saber-practice behind the guild hall.

Sta'Ry's fellow competitors try not to stare at her hairy shoulders.



Who is she? She's beautiful

The 2004 Miss Galaxies line-up...

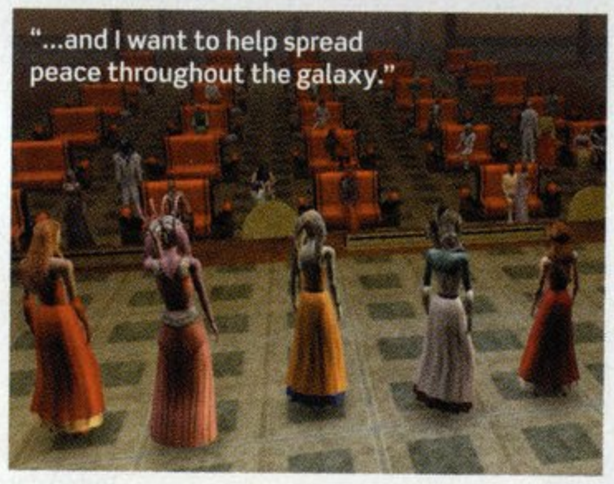
CONTESTANT	PROFILE
Sta'Ry	Miss Talus 2004. Sta'Ry shocked the galaxy by walking away with the crown but from the moment the slim, toned, hairy (*steady on* - Ed) figure took the stage she had already won. Her patience and compassion, touching tales of her upbringing and an emotional poem entitled "A child never known" only put a seal on the result.
Ihelia	Miss Naboo 2004. Having lost out in 2003, this determined young lady returned to take the Naboo title, with an eye for colour and a talent for witty ripostes. A native of the planet of Alderaan, Ihelia is just as handy with a sword as she is with a pair of hair tongs, and she's happily married to a Zabrak brawler. So back off.
Rumer	Miss Corellia 2004. Another veteran of the contest, Rumer once again caught the judges' eyes in a stunning swimsuit, only to surpass even that by acting out a self-penned play in the talent round. Blessed with a holographic and audiographic memory she's not likely to forget the judges' minor criticisms and will return more strongly in 2005.
Olana	Miss Tatooine 2004. The sun and sand of Olana's homeplanet proved to have been kind to her complexion, as her rather skimpy swimsuit showed to full effect. This wasn't quite enough to overshadow our lady Wookiee, but Olana showed a strong desire to succeed that will no doubt see her return next year. Perhaps with even more flesh on show.
Lavanya	Miss Lok 2004. A newcomer to the beauty pageant circuit, Lavanya's nerves perhaps showed on the night. However, she won praised for her natural beauty, and Lavanya truly won over the judges when she interrupted her song and dance routine to offer a speech that came straight from the heart. One to watch in 2005.

ON THE DVD See all the action from the Miss Naboo 2003 contest > Movies

sheer fun of meeting new ladies and trying something new," explains Il'Ustra. "I'm sure the judges saw that wonderful fire in her eyes that I see."

Nonetheless, the hairy humanoids are more associated with ripping limbs from their sockets than putting eyes on stalks. And there were more than a few whispers that the judges had conveniently chosen to ignore Sta'Rys prominent bikini line in the swimsuit round. "I have heard a few mumblings from Twi'leks upset that a Wookiee took the title," confides Il'Ustra. "But we all know that Wookiees and Twi'leks don't have a very friendly past."

But there was no denying Sta'Ry her crown. She walked away not only with the coveted title but also a war-chest of prizes donated from all corners of the galaxy. Sta'Ry bagged five million credits, a new swoop bike, a fully decorated house and customised jewellery and clothing donated from loyal supporters of the show. "We try to make these donations more and more appealing each year," Il'Ustra told us.



"After all, it's all about the ladies".

Sta'Ry also gets to lead the life of a celebrity for a year, recognised on every planet and taking part in Hello-magazine style photoshoots for the pageant website (**www.missgalaxyswg.com**). As for Il'Ustra, she's busy working on a huge cross-server event, and appealing to guild leaders for support.

> I'm sure the judges saw the fire in her eyes that I see

Both the pageant and Nabooty Entertainment are going from strength to strength, so much so that Il'Ustra is currently musing over the idea of a male beauty contest before the year is out. It sounds like another essential *SWG* event. Then again, the idea of a Mon Calamari in a codpiece is wrong on so many levels.

MARK SUTHERNS

EXPERT ADVICE ON GRAPHICS CARDS

The most important component inside a gaming PC

BY JEREMY LAIRD

Picture, if you will, this scene. A mustard-keen PC gamer feverishly rips open a shiny new copy of *Zombie Rampage 25*, boots up and installs. There follows wailing and gnashing of teeth as the horrifying truth washes over him – his dusty, ancient PC's get-up-and-go has got up and left. As an exercise in hair-tearing futility, you can't beat trying to get a bleeding edge, fresh-out-of-the-box PC game to run on a creaky old PC with an antediluvian video card. We've all been there.

It's all down to the constant, ruthless technological progress that is synonymous with the PC platform. While it propels PCs to the cutting edge of video gaming, it also presents headaches for enthusiasts trying to hit a constantly moving target in their choice of hardware. Two years ago, the best video card on the market was nVidia's popular GeForce 4 Ti 4600. It's still a decent enough item for running most games, but hardly the weapon of choice for the latest DirectX 9-powered fodder such as *Far Cry* and *Halo*. So, when you're perusing the video card market, don't kid yourself that your new pride and joy will be all that great for new titles two years on. It won't.

But make no mistake, that choice is by far the most important you'll make when configuring your PC for gaming. Sure, a powerful processor is a priority, but if your video card can't handle the pace, even a $1,000 Pentium 4 Extreme Edition CPU will be about as much use as a French diplomat at a White House summit. What's more, there's plenty you can do to ensure the card you plump for today is still delivering the goods a year from now.

Avoid anything not based on nVidia or ATi

For starters, it's worth understanding the different approaches ATi and nVidia have taken recently in supporting Microsoft's DirectX 9 – that's the Microsoft 3D graphics standard on which the vast majority of upcoming games, including the killer titles like *Half-Life 2* and *Stalker*, will be based. Putting it simply, ATi's Radeon 9600 and 9800 GPUs (as well as the all-new X800) are brute force DirectX 9 speed kings to nVidia's more sophisticated GeForce FX family of cards. But that apparently straightforward contrast doesn't tell the whole story. Because nVidia's GeForce FX cards harbour a dark secret. Sophisticated they may be, but fast at running so-called shader effects they most definitely are not. And those shader programs are central to creating the stunning water and surface reflection effects, for instance, that make DirectX 9 titles so visually compelling. Consequently, GeForce FX cards are often forced to run lower shader quality in titles like *Far Cry* in order to achieve competitive, playable frame rates. And let's face it, you need decent frame rates to be competitive in a gaming world where split seconds matter. It's worth noting, however, that the new GeForce 6800 series addresses this problem head-on. From our early viewing of what's in store, we expect the 6800 Ultra and its upcoming brethren to produce the goods in DirectX 9.

With all that in mind, just where should you invest your hard-earned? The first thing you can do is avoid anything not based on nVidia or ATi technology like the plague. No other graphics company comes close. Similarly, don't indulge in the false economy cards at the low end of the market. So, that's ATi's Radeon 9000 and 9200 and nVidia's GeForce FX 5200 ruled out. They're cheap, maybe, but they're barely adequate for current games, much less future titles. It's the mid range products, the

VIDEO OUTPUTS
Video cards connect to your monitor via either VGA (for old-school CRT displays) or DVI (typically for flat panels). Many cards also offer S-video for viewing on your TV.

FAN/HEAT SINK
Video cards spew out serious heat. So, most have a large heat sink and fan for cooling. Note that some are so huge they prevent the card from fitting in small form factor PCs.

GPU
High-end GPUs actually have more transistors than the most powerful desktop processors - over 200 million on nVidia's GeForce 6800. The fastest run at clockspeeds of over 500MHz.

SYSTEMS README

›**WHY AM I HERE?** Because we're going to cut through the graphics card smoke and mirrors and get to the real facts.

›**RISK FACTOR?** Don't upgrade your card and you may...

›**IS IT EASY?** Yes, if you are as clever as a...

›**SELL IT TO ME...** A cutting-edge video card enables you to play the latest games with stunning visual quality.

PCGAMES ADDICT DICTIONARY THE OED OF GAMING

Pixels ›These are the individual coloured dots or 'picture elements' that make up the image you see on your computer display.
GPU ›The Graphics Processing Unit is the silicon brain behind the stunning graphics that modern video cards produce.
Pixel Shader ›A graphics function that calculates effects on a per-pixel basis. Enables graphics with organic, realistic surfaces.
Pixel Pipeline ›A pixel pipeline renders a single pixel each time a GPU goes through a "cycle". More pipelines mean better performance.
DirectX 9 ›The Microsoft graphics platform upon which most games are based. Also provides hardware definitions for 3D shaders.

MEMORY CHIPS
Two factors to worry about here – speed and quantity. You'll need a dose of both to run the latest games at high resolutions. 600MHz DDR and 128Mb are the bare minimums you should accept.

MOLEX CONNECTOR
Modern video cards are such power hungry beasts, the AGP socket cannot supply enough juice. A Molex socket provides a vital secondary power source.

Radeon 9600s and GeForce FX 5700s of this world, that should be treated as the bare minimum for any serious PC gamer. And you won't be surprised to hear we'd opt for the ATi offering in XT trim.

There are simply too many doubts surrounding the FX 5700's DirectX 9 abilities. But be sure not to pay more than around $250. Likewise, don't be lured into going for any more than 128Mb of video memory on a midrange card, it won't help performance.

At the top end, it's all change with a pair of brand new GPUs from the two main players. If you're made of moolah simply turn to page 128 for our take on the battle between the Radeon X800 and GeForce 6800. For everyone else, the good news is that those new cards will force prices for the outgoing flagship cards ever lower. If you're on a very tight budget, nVidia's GeForce FX 5900 XT looks attractive at $370. But do yourself a favour and pay the extra $50 a Radeon 9800 Pro will knock you back. You'll be happy you did when you're deep inside City 17, soaking up *Half-Life 2*'s gorgeous graphics exactly as the boys from Valve intended.

However, if you're willing to wait, or not planning to buy immediately, there's plenty to look forward to later this year. The venerable AGP graphics interface is due to be replaced by PCI Express, enabling PC graphics to move up yet another gear, although the immediate benefits will be slim to none. Of more interest is the raft of affordable cards derived from the Radeon X800 and GeForce 6800. They promise to make cutting edge performance more affordable than ever. Let the games begin.

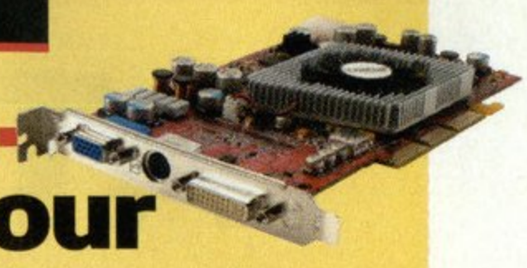
Want a tech topic covered?
Then mail your request to:
jerel@derwenthoward.com.au

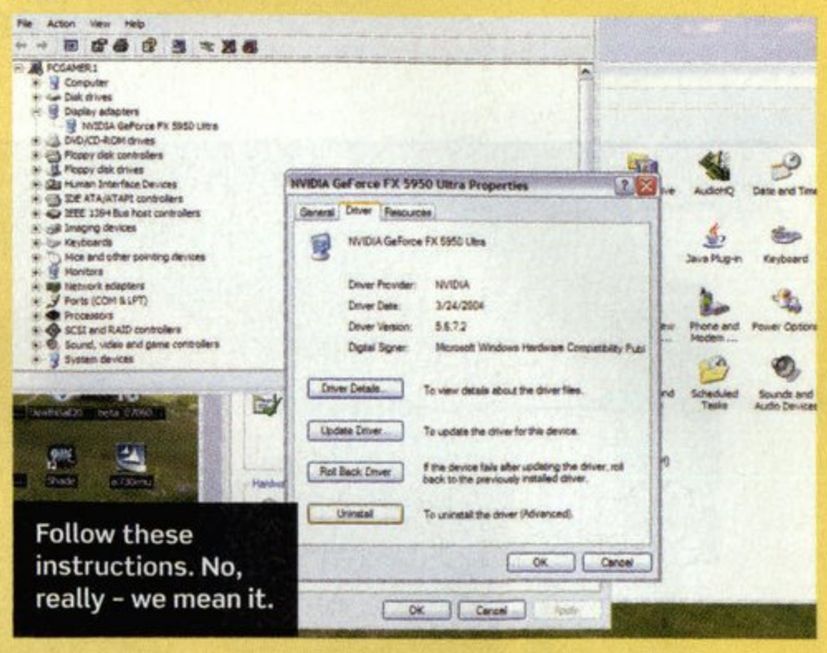
WHAT NEXT...?

›Turn the page and read our review of ATI's latest cutting-edge silicon slice.
›A medium range card (Radeon 9600 or GeForce Fx5700) is the bare minimum.
›Take a peek inside your PC – is there a spare Molex connector and space for a dual-slot card? The latest cards need 'em as standard.
›Buy a top end card if you possibly can. It'll be the best investment you make.
›Have a trawl on www.ht.com.au, www.emagen.com.au and www.eyo.com.au for the best prices. Expect to pay $900 top whack.

MASTERCLASS

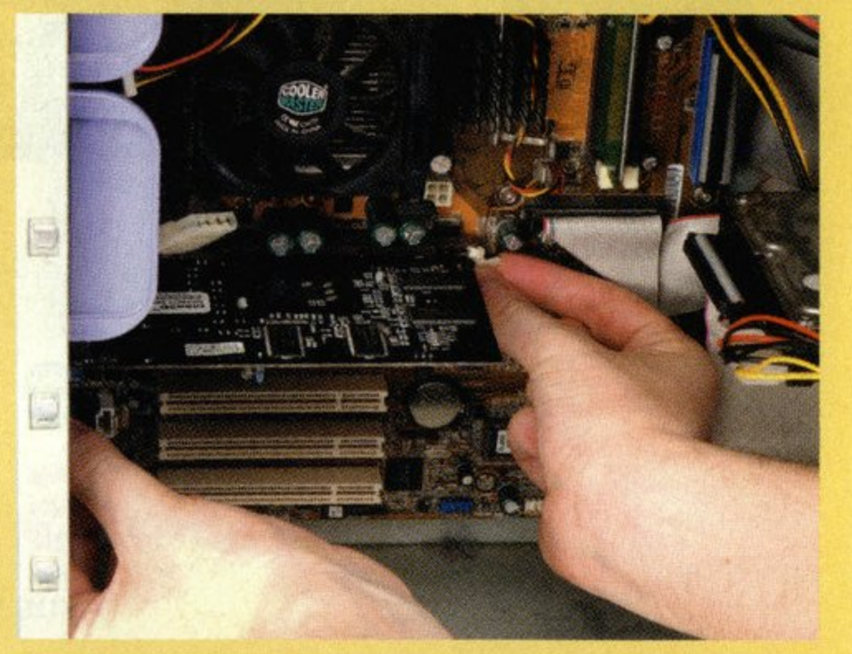
How to... Install your graphics card



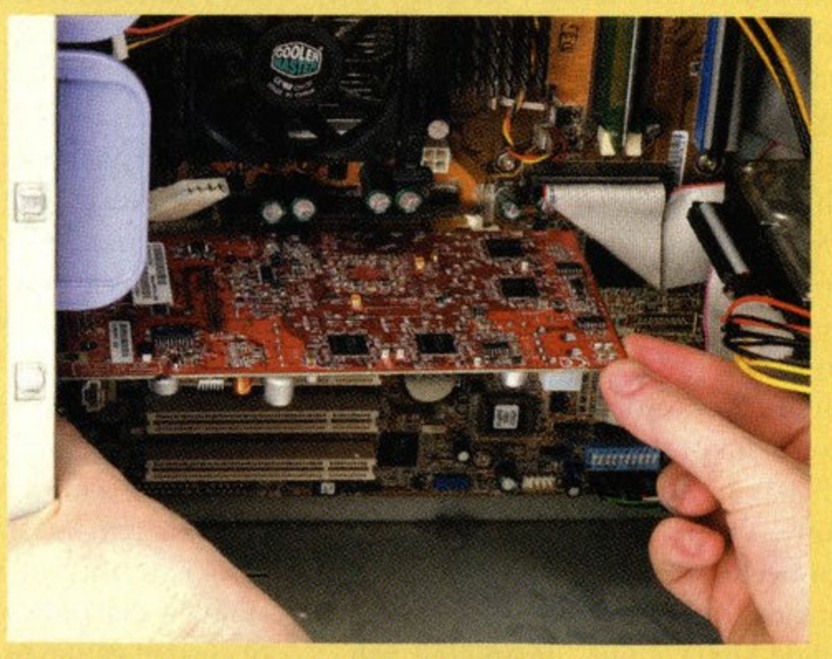


Follow these instructions. No, really – we mean it.

1 Uninstall your current video driver via Device Manager in Windows. PC components are tough but you can short-circuit (and destroy beyond repair) your card just by touching it. Avoid shooting bolts of static electricity by wearing an anti-static wristband or by grounding yourself. Just touch a large piece of metal (such as the internal chassis of your PC) before you handle the card. And don't wear rubber shoes.



2 Open her up. Now power down, unplug and crack her open. If your current video card has a secondary power cable, disconnect that first. Then unfasten the retaining screw which secures the PCI bracket (that's the metal plate at the end of the card). Next, loosen the white clip at the end of the AGP socket (furthest from the edge of the chassis) and remove the card.

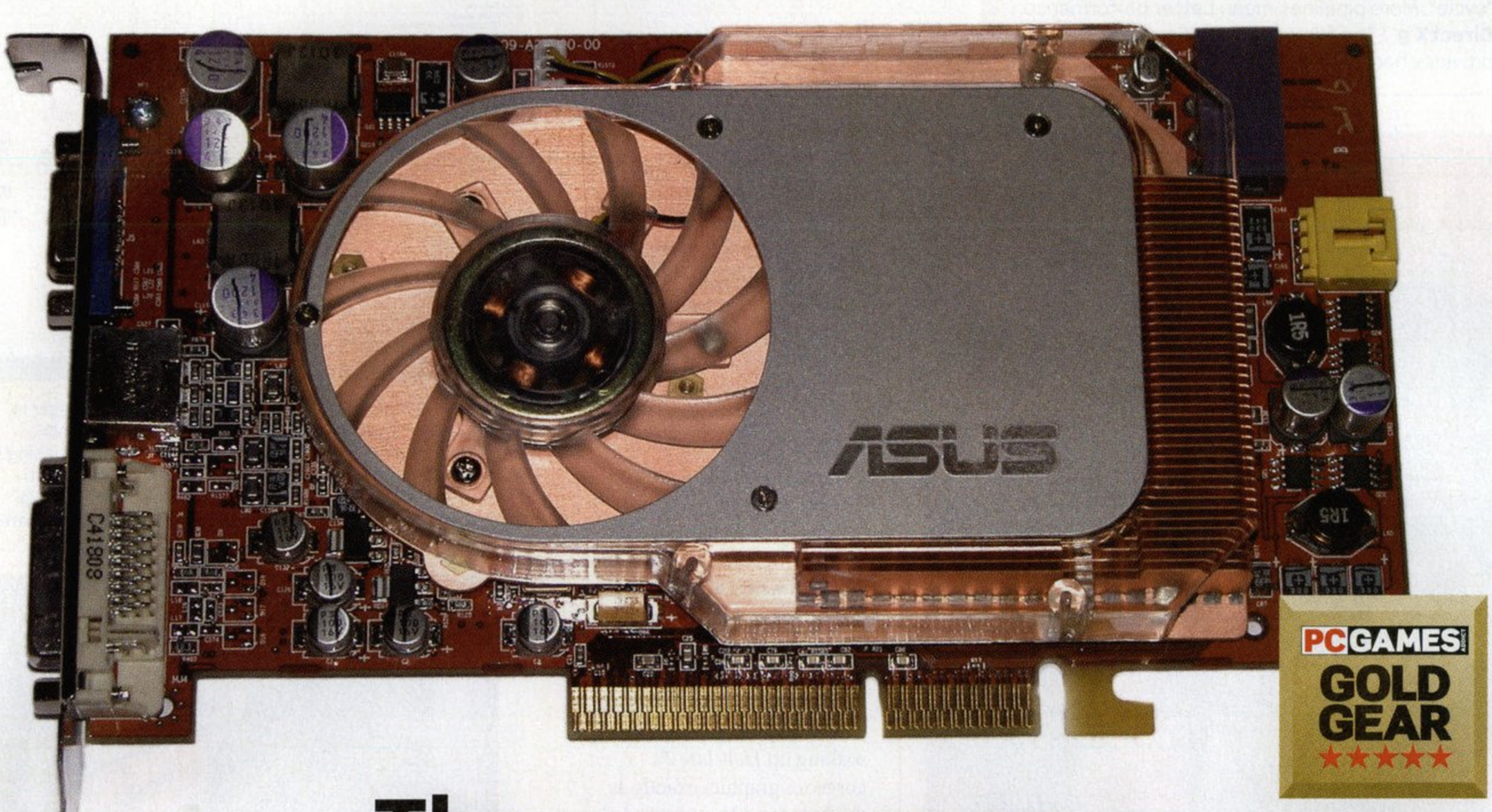


3 Guide it home. Line up the gold connectors on the bottom of the card with the AGP socket and slide the card home carefully but firmly. Be sure to fasten the bracket screw – if the card moves when the PC is running the result is usually terminal. Now attach any secondary power connectors. Seal the case and reboot. Drop in the driver that came with your card and follow the instructions. It's that simple.

ATI STRIKE BACK!

Incredible performance without the headaches

BY JERE LAWRENCE - HARDWARE EDITOR



PC GAMES GOLD GEAR ★★★★★

The war rages on ASUS AX800XT $899

Asus www.synnex.com.au 1300 880 038

Right on the heels of nVIDIA's FX6800, ATi have finally launched their premiere product, the X800XT. Essentially a faster version of the X800 Pro which we've already reviewed in a previous issue there are still some key features of the X800XT that set it apart from the opposition.

By far the most important difference between this card and the FX6800 is that ATi's offering causes no power issues at all. In contrast to the FX6800 which requires a 350W+ power supply and input from two Molex connectors. The X800XT will work, out of the box, on a system with a 300W power supply and takes power from only one Molex connector. Basically, if your machine already features a video card with a single Molex input, the X800XT will work on your system with no brown outs and no need to buy a new power supply. As we pointed out in last month's FX6800 review though, the same cannot be said for nVIDIA's high end card.

The heart of the X800XT, the graphical processing unit (GPU) is a 160 million transistor chip manufactured at the 0.13 micron level and it's important to note though that ATi's GPU at 160 million transistors is 62 million transistors smaller than the FX6800. The reality is that the ATi GPU is smaller because it doesn't offer the full range of functions as the FX6800.

Supporting only Shader Model 2.0b the X800XT is behind its competition which features complete support for Shader Model 3.0 (SM3.0), the most recent API. The question remains though how much of an issue this will really be. The reality is that only a very small handful of current games use the functions in SM3.0 and support for it is going to have to be specifically negotiated by nVIDIA's "it plays better" department. Said department's success is going to be crucial as well because it's costly for developers to make multiple versions of software and if the ATI X800 install base is high enough they will simply scale back to SM2.0b making the FX6800's advanced abilities superfluous. On the upside, the X800XT's smaller GPU size allows the core to be clocked at 520MHz, 120MHz faster than the FX6800 and 256MB of DDR3 memory running at 1100MHz allows for textures, normal maps and lighting effects to be processed at amazingly fast speeds.

KEY FEATURES

- **16 pixel pipelines**
- 6 vertex shaders
- **520MHz core**
- 1.12Ghz DDR3 memory
- **AGP 8x**
- Shader Model 2.0b
- **Single slot form factor**
- 300W power supply required

One area where the X800XT is superior to the opposition is a set of hardware functions called 3Dc. This allows for the compression of textures with no discernible image loss from the original. More impressive though is 3Dc's ability to compress an object. An extremely complex process, the GPU scales a 3D object and then uses a normal map for fine detail and lighting information.

But just how fast is the X800XT? Very. Scoring 11,227 3D Marks, it's only 6 points off the FX6800's score rendering both devices effectively identical in terms of performance. This means that games with stratospheric needs such as Far Cry and Lock On can be played at 1600x1200, all settings maxed at around 60fps with 4x anti aliasing and for future titles such as Doom 3 and Half Life 2 you're assured an amazing frame rate at high resolutions. On that note both those titles have been in development while two generations of video technology have been released.

Ultimately, the X800XT can stand proud as the king of video cards. It's a single slot solution and will thus work in mini home theatre systems, is low heat and low wattage so consumers will be able to upgrade with much more confidence and security while retaining all the performance of its rival.

PC GAMES ADDICT

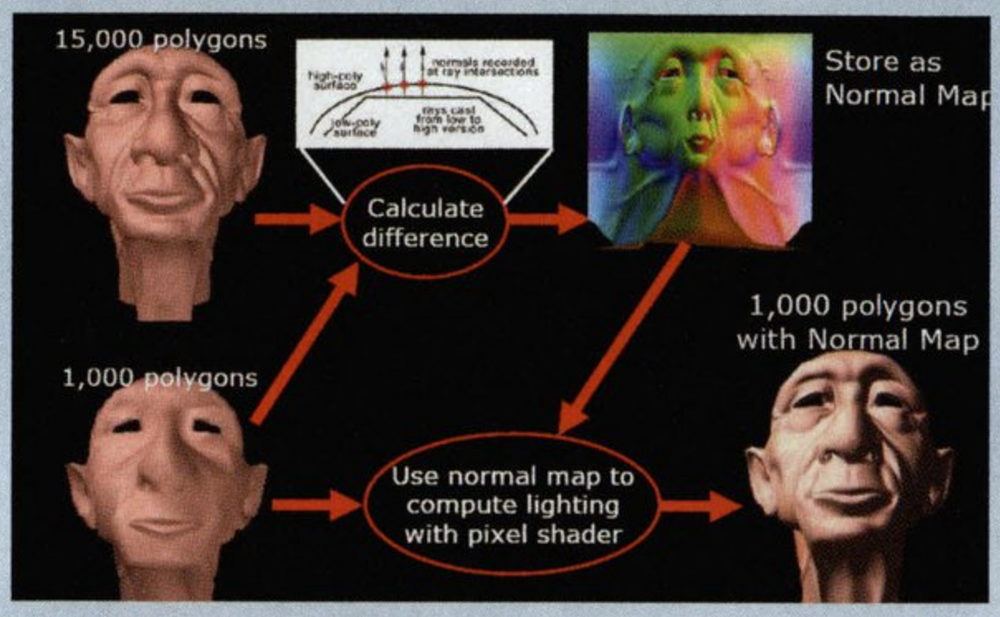
PERFORMANCE 96%
VALUE 65%

› The best video card in the world today!

94%

The AX800XT in action

Making full use of the vertex shader and displacement mapping, each side of the crystal can be lit and sparkle accordingly. The pixel shader is also used with lighting effects and the skin detail on the hands.


15,000 polygons
Store as Normal Map
Calculate difference
1,000 polygons
1,000 polygons with Normal Map
Use normal map to compute lighting with pixel shader

This explains how 3Dc can create huge performance increases. By de-sampling a primary object and using a normal map it can be scaled down, in this case 15 to 1, with no discernible visual difference from the original, but with full pixel shader controlled lighting.

Lighting plays a big part in the feature set of the AX800. Here you can see two examples of light rendering. The left hand side is using sub-surface scattering to give the appearance that it's well lit. The right hand side removes the effect to make the environment seem darker.

The transition in full effect. Here you can see how the use of subsurface scattering in different areas of the model can give the impression of different types of light (ambient and spot) hitting the object.

Multi format madness
ASUS DRW-0804P 8X DVD +- $189

Asus www.synnex.com 1300 880 038 $189

At least the advent of DVD technology has given engineers a new optical play thing with which they can weave their electronic magic and it's in the realm of multi format DVD burning that is receiving a lot of attention. Hardly the first multi-format drive, what makes this burner special is that it can burn either format the same speed. That's to say it can burn both plus (+R/RW) and minus (-R/RW) formats at the 8x speed, while most burners favour one or the other.

Averaging 11MB/sec when burning a DVD it only takes 7 minutes for the data to be written plus an additional 2 minutes for table of contents and lead out. 9 minutes to burn 4.8GB of data is excellent performance though it's a shame the Asus team didn't add DVD-RAM to the soup.

PC GAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 93%
VALUE 72%
› The fastest burner, at least for now
85%

Abundant storage
MAXTOR MAXLINE III 250GB SATA HDD $420

Maxtor www.maxtor.com (02) 9368 3662

PC GAMES ADDICT GOLD GEAR ★★★★★

Offering 250GB of storage the Maxline III is the first hard disk to offer any real serious competition to Western Digital's high end hard disks. Spinning at a speed of 7200 RPM Maxtor's drive can achieve a sustainable transfer rate of 54MB/sec, just like other 7200 RPM disks available. Where Maxtor have excelled though is the drive's burst mode which hits an astounding 79.8MB/sec, 19MB/sec faster than any other 7200RPM hard disk we've reviewed. Brilliant!

But for even more amazing performance, just add RAID and due to the fact that Maxtor provided two identical hard disks for us to review we could even test it. 112MB/sec was the sustained transfer rate over a RAID 0 setup with just two drives and a four hard disk setup would be 60 - 80% faster again (~200MB/sec). This is however a purely SATA drive with SATA power inputs only so you'll need both a compatible motherboard and power supply. Not cheap, but worth every penny if speed matters.

PC GAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 95%
VALUE 80%
› Fast burst operations give this drive an edge
91%

PCI EXPRESS ARRIVES

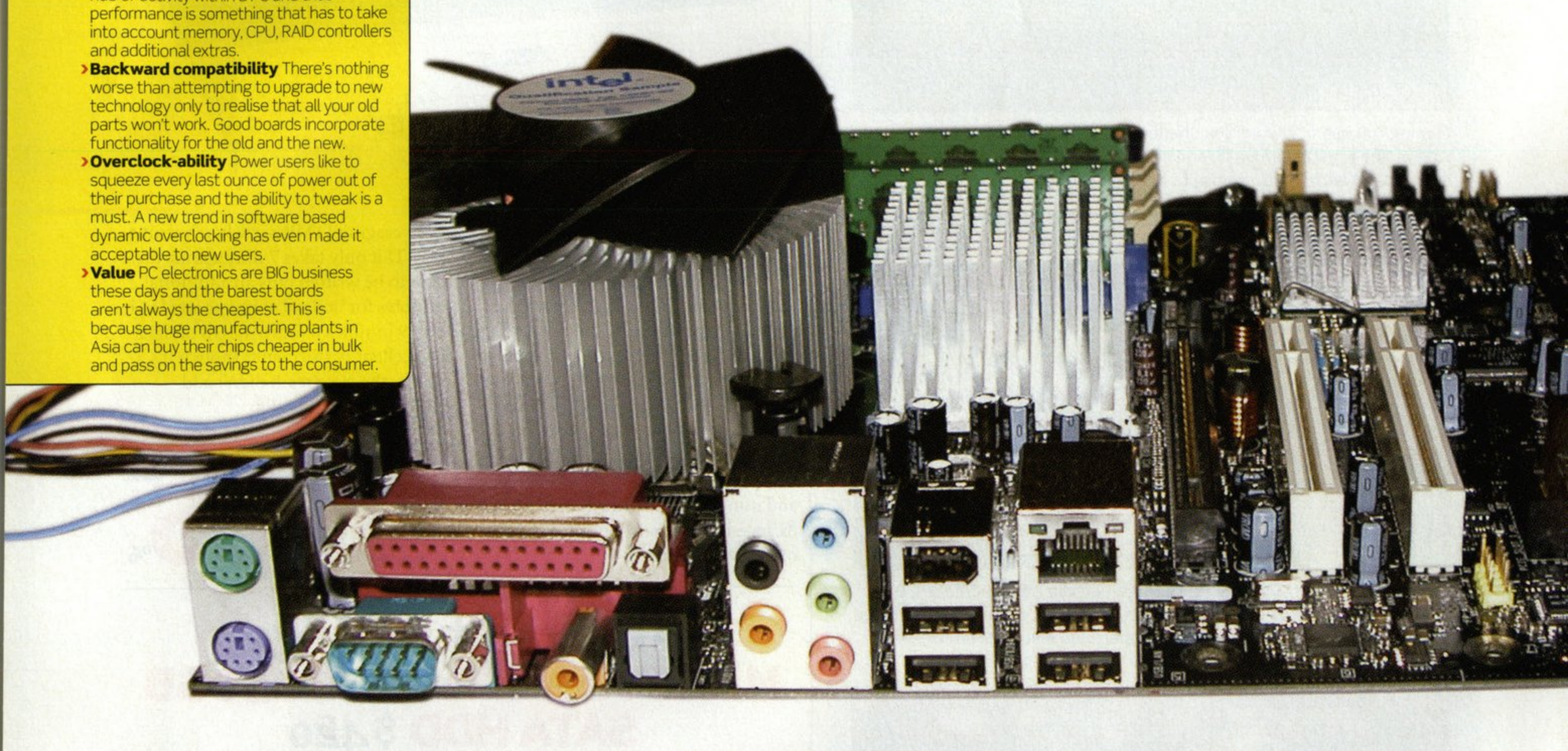
Is this the next essential upgrade?

BY JERE LAWRENCE - HARDWARE EDITOR

REVIEW CRITERIA

WE'RE LOOKING FOR...

- **Performance** The motherboard is the main hub of activity within a PC and thus performance is something that has to take into account memory, CPU, RAID controllers and additional extras.
- **Backward compatibility** There's nothing worse than attempting to upgrade to new technology only to realise that all your old parts won't work. Good boards incorporate functionality for the old and the new.
- **Overclock-ability** Power users like to squeeze every last ounce of power out of their purchase and the ability to tweak is a must. A new trend in software based dynamic overclocking has even made it acceptable to new users.
- **Value** PC electronics are BIG business these days and the barest boards aren't always the cheapest. This is because huge manufacturing plants in Asia can buy their chips cheaper in bulk and pass on the savings to the consumer.



Power! We need more power, damnit!

INTEL 925X

Intel www.intel.com (02) 9937 5800

The hype has been building up for the last few months but it's finally here, PCI Express, the latest iteration of PCI with four times the bandwidth of AGP 8x. Let's examine that statement closely though. PCI Express is just the name for a bus and a bus is simply a means by which different parts of the computer communicate with each other. Thus PCI Express does not give the promise of four times the performance, but rather just four times the bandwidth.

The first in the range of improvements is the most dramatic. AGP 8x, the preceding technology uses a single bus that read and write operations have to share in order to get to the GPU/CPU. PCI Express fixes this with a dedicated bus for read and write operations that function concurrently. Thus in a situation where a read and a write were to occur sequentially, the AGP bus would have to process one command after the other while PCI Express can process both operations along its dual bus simultaneously and in that situation would yield twice the performance.

But when it comes to video performance increases the results are interesting. Level loading time in a game is dramatically increased due to all the bandwidth available to transfer textures to the video card's memory. But videogame developers are very smart people and don't release games that will saturate a user's video bus. So while PCI Express achieves some performance increases from its concurrent methodology it won't be until developers start to pump many multiple layers of textures and normal maps down the bus that PCI Express will really shine.

Fast video is only one improvement to the new 915/925 chipset and a new consumer level RAID controller referred to as Intel Matrix Storage Technology offers huge performance increases. The beauty of Matrix Storage technology is that it allows for multiple RAID types across two drives and it's possible to have the first half of the setup configured for RAID 0 for fast striped performance while the second half can be setup for RAID 1 so that important data can be mirrored. More so, performance in RAID 0 operations are absolutely incredible, reaching heights of 112MB/sec (megabytes a second) applications and games don't seem to load, they just happen.

KEY FEATURES

- **Uses Prescott Processor**
- 16 x PCI Express
- **Matrix RAID**
- DDR2533 Memory
- **New Heat Sink fan required**
- New Power supply required
- **800MHz front side bus**

Another interesting change comes in the form of the CPU as well. Even though no major CPU improvements have been made since the Extreme Edition (EE) Pentium 4 the new chip has no pins. Instead it's the motherboard socket that's pinned which the CPU sits on. Also required is a breed of new heat sink fan as the mounts are totally different and at least in the interim there isn't much of an overclocking potential until these compatible heat sinks become commonly available.

As to whether or not to upgrade yet, the big two, *Half-Life 2* and *Doom 3* will see benefits from PCI Express so if your days and nights are consumed with nothing but the thought of running either game in perfection, start upgrading now. Otherwise PCI Express is the kind of technology that you inevitably upgrade to with the next motherboard purchase.

In summary, PCI Express brings awesome improvements but requires the assembly of a new PC.

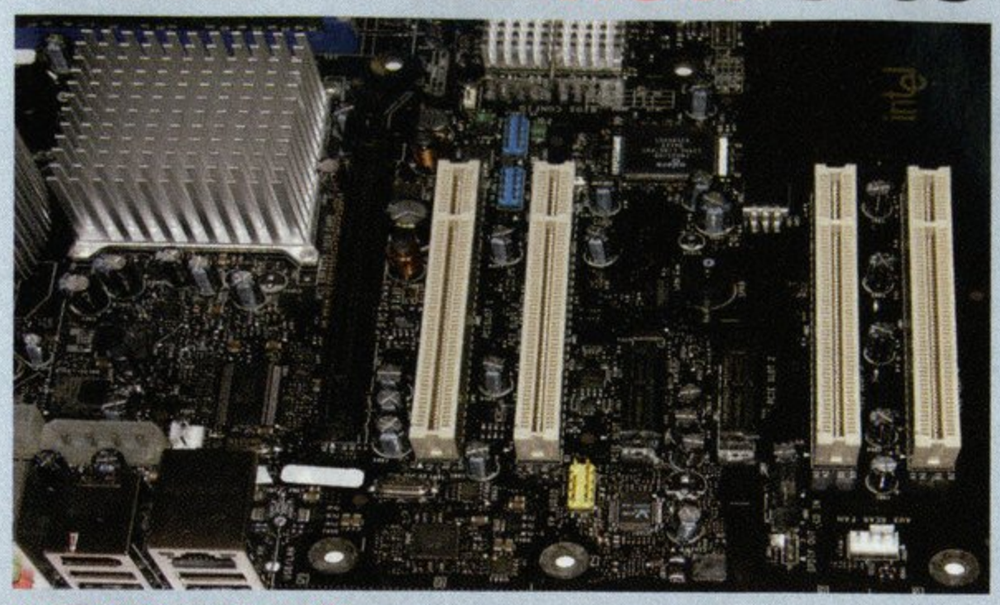
PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 92%
VALUE 84%

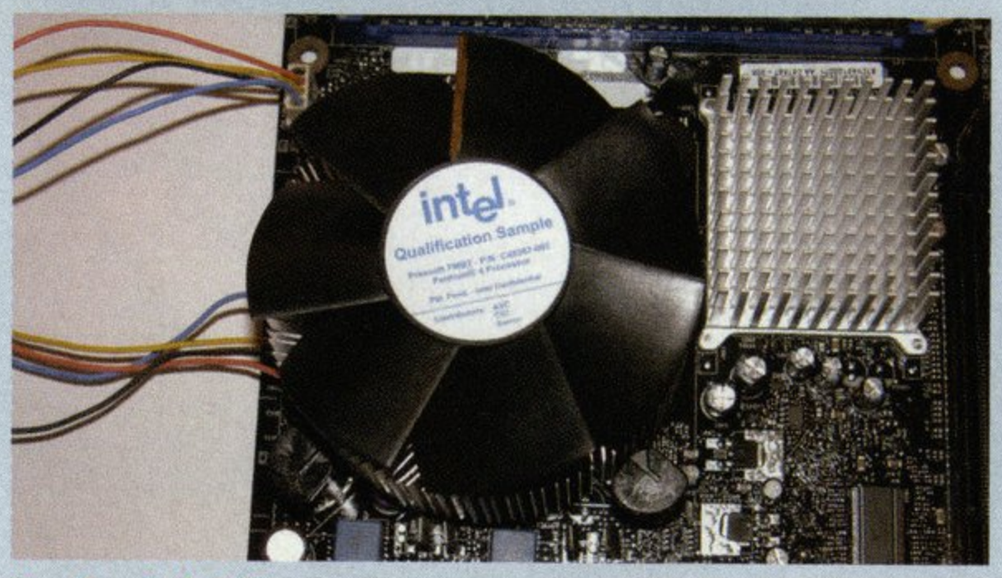
88%

The best base to build a new PC upon

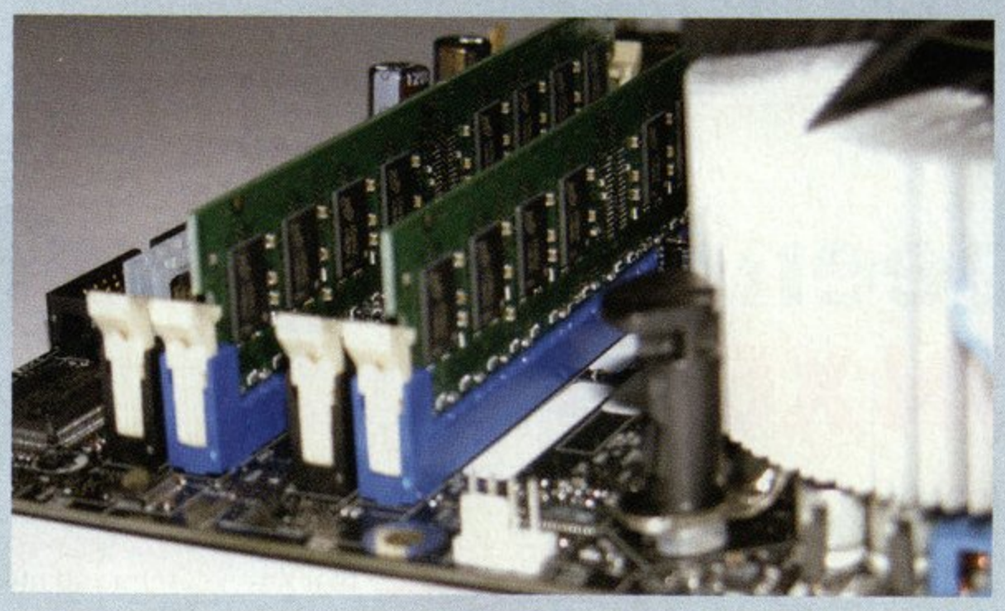
PCIE - The new bits



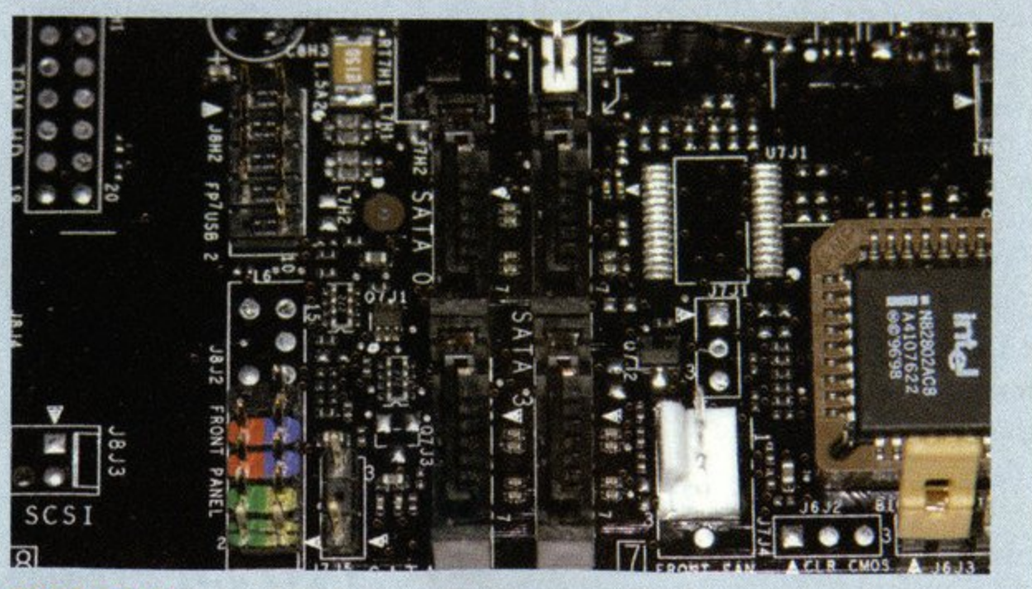
The PCI Express ports And here's PCI Express in all its naked glory. The long black port on the left is the PCI Express graphics port (16x) while the two tiny ports in the middle are PCIE 2x interfaces for as yet unreleased expansion cards.



New heat sink fan Goodbye tension based levers. Intel's new heat sink fan is literally a snap to install, with four clips to press down. The stock standard Intel cooler is adequate but not recommended for overclocking, so wait until newer compatible sinks come out.



DDR2 533 Memory Another reason that the 915/925 boards show excellent performance is with the use of DDR2 533 memory. These modules are installed in a dual channel configuration to ensure maximum performance.



SATA RAID As hard disks become increasingly cheaper there's no longer any kind of excuse to not have a RAID setup because it's damn fast - and scalable. The Intel Matrix RAID controller can support up to four SATA150 hard disks offering performance up to 200MB/sec.

A unique weapon
MSI 915P NEO 2 PLATINUM $249

MSI www.msicomputer.com.au (02) 9748 0070

When you're incorporating someone else's chipset it's the little details that make one motherboard superior to another and MSI are offering a rich feature set.

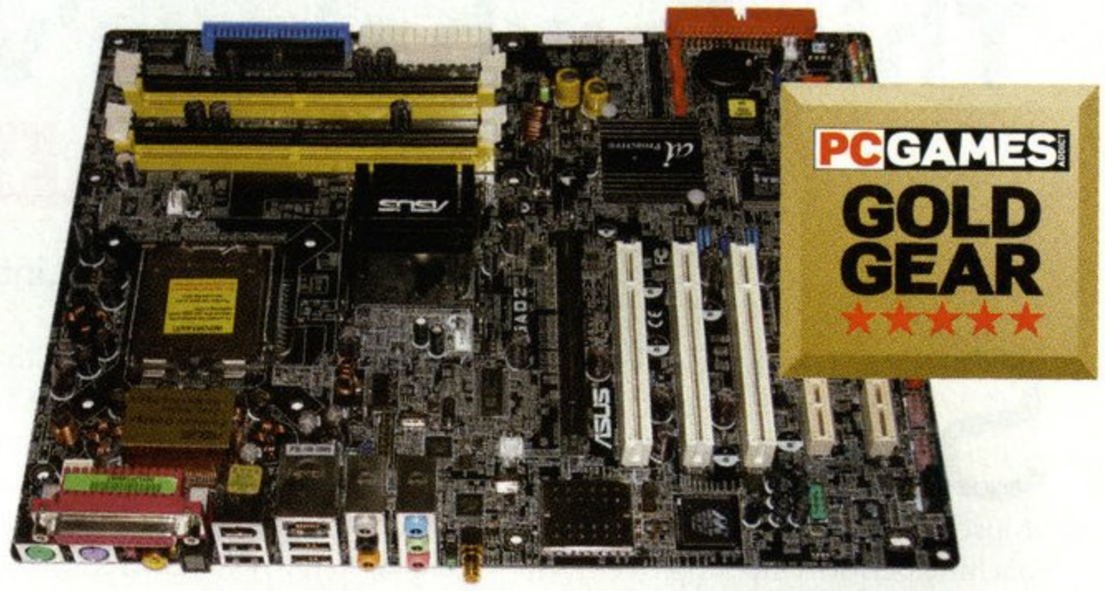
The 915P Neo supports up to 4GB of DDR2533 memory in dual channel configuration, four SATA150 ports and three ATA133 ports over two RAID controllers. On the SATA interface, Intel's Matrix RAID technology can be used while on the ATA133 interface another four drives can be configured for RAID using the VIA6410 IDE RAID controller, cool.

A comprehensive BIOS allows for the CPU frequency, front side bus (FSB), memory timing and voltage to be overclocked. Of course upping the CPU and FSB though isn't really feasible until compatible, high powered heat sinks are available.

PC GAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 92%
VALUE 88%
› A top choice for the tweakers out there
89%

The complete solution
ASUS P5AD2 PREMIUM WIRELESS $420

Asus www.synnex.com.au 1300 880 038 $370



Quite simply this is the most comprehensive 925X solution available. There's all the usual support for Prescott processors and 4GB of dual channel DDR2533 memory but being the "one uppers" that Asus are this board utilises three RAID controllers.

There's the integrated Intel Matrix RAID technology for the first four SATA controllers along with an additional four SATA connectors controlled by the Sil3114R RAID controller with hot swap support (RAID 5) and RAID 10. The final controller allows for four ATA133 hard disks to also be configured.

Other nice additions include an 802.11g Wi-Fi device and dual gigabit Ethernet support. Overclocking is also catered for through BIOS and a Windows app that monitors system performance and dynamically overclocks the CPU.

An exceptional motherboard that would find itself at home, in either a server controlling the world's data or in a hardcore gamer's PC.

PC GAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 96%
VALUE 75%
› A 925 board bursting with functionality
91%

PCI EXPRESS

THE VIDEO CARDS

BY JERE LAWRENCE - HARDWARE EDITOR

REVIEW CRITERIA

WE'RE LOOKING FOR...

- **Quality** Each manufacturer will use a different cooling solution and a better heat sink fan, or sinks on the memory chips allow for better overclockability.
- **Overclocking** Video cards made by high end manufacturers often come with software that will dynamically overclock a device for a free increase in performance.
- **Bundled software** An X600 is an X600 but the quality of the bundled software can be a big factor in sweetening the deal.
- **Value** Of course there's no point in paying a high price for the added extras, especially if you better things to do, or games to buy, with the savings.

This is what we've been waiting for?

ATI RADEON X600

Intel www.intel.com (02) 9937 5800

So far we've received PCI Express (PCIE) quite warmly. The technology is sound and the Intel 915/925 chipset offers the kind of overall machine performance expected from a major technological upgrade. From a video performance perspective though it will be some time before we're able to establish any real performance increases from PCIE.

This is predominately because the only cards released for PCIE so far are the X600s which is the budget end of the PCIE line. Featuring an RV380 core manufactured at the 0.13 level the X600 has a core clock of 500MHz and a memory clock of 756MHz. The problem though is that it only features four pixel and two vertex pipelines which really falls apart under DirectX 9 scrutiny and ultimately it was this lack of additional hardware that caused the X600 to receive a score of only 4180 3D marks, one third the score of the AGP based AX800XT.

In fact with closer investigation ATi have given us a hint as to their naming convention and the X600 is very similar to the AGP based RADEON 9600. Both have a 500MHz core, use DDR1 memory and support SmartShader 2.0 and SmoothShader 2.1 operations. Thus with a little delving we can begin to get an idea as to the kinds of video performance increases that PCIE offers.

Having already reviewed and benched the 9600 almost a year ago our records showed it had a score of 3696 3D Marks which is essentially only 484 3D Marks less than the PCIE version. Ultimately this represents a 13% increase in performance and would be very much due to shifting write traffic onto a separate bus - explained in our coverage of PCIE motherboard technology.

Actually, this might be information that Intel isn't in a hurry for people to discover because they simply want the next iteration of technology universally accepted. The reality though is that with a quality P4C motherboard with plenty of overclocking options and a powerful CPU heat sink fan it's possible for 3.0GHz P4s to run stable at 3.55Ghz on a 966Mhz FSB. These same boards also feature RAID controllers that offer the same kind of blazing disk performance.

In respect to the power user market, Intel will be banking on memory performance and the perceived or real increase in video performance that PCI Express offers. For gaming it will just have to be seen if developers start to write code that throws around so much data as to saturate the AGP8x bus making PCI Express a requirement.

KEY FEATURES

- **4 pixel pipelines**
- 2 vertex shaders
- **500MHz core clock**
- 756MHz effective memory
- **PCI Express 16x**
- Shader Model 2.0

Obviously it won't be until a direct comparison can be made between two identical cards with a different interface, i.e. the AX800XT and the X800XT that we will be able to see the performance increases on offer. Realistically, the boost will most likely figure around the 10% mark and places PCI Express technology as something to be embraced in the next major upgrade rather than the hottest new kit that must be immediately lusted after.

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 65%
VALUE 89%

› An entry level PCI Express video solution

66%

Bare necessities
SAPPHIRE X600 $369

Achieva www.achieva.com.au (02) 9742 3288

Sapphire has gone from offering cut price minimalist solutions to a more middle of the road product with this X600 card. There are still however some lingering budget elements and unless you're skilled at removing heat sinks, don't even begin to think about overclocking this card.

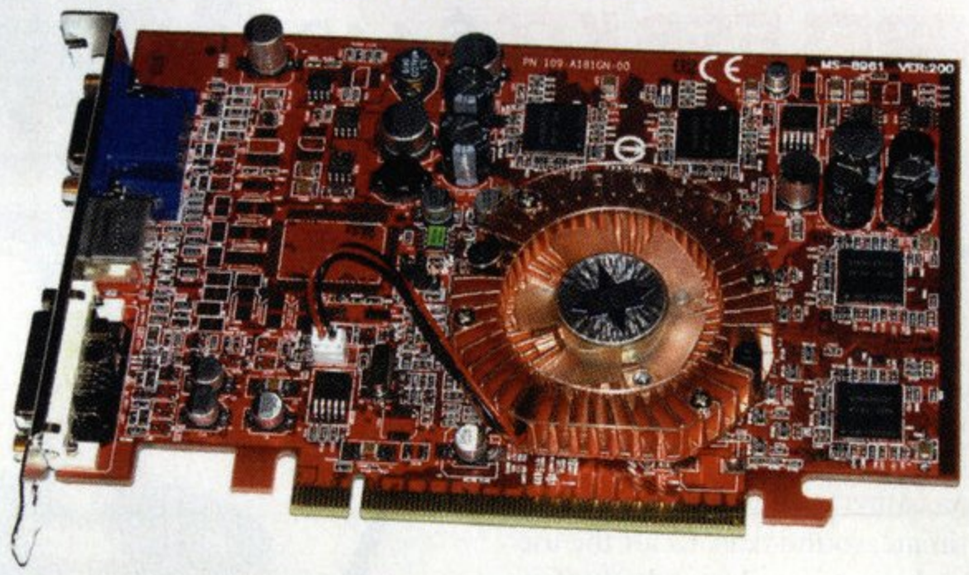
One look at the heat sink confirms this. That is if we could call it a heat sink because it's really just a little fan encased in a plastic metal alloy and offers only adequate cooling with memory fully exposed.

Although only slightly cheaper than the MSI offering, chances are by the time you read this excess stock is already falling in price and the software bundle of two full games, *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* and *Prince of Persia: Sands of Time* is quite good. But with this range of cards cost is a very important factor and its worth watching the brands as they all try and out-price each other.

PC GAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 65%
VALUE 84%
65%
›PCIE complete with a decent software bundle

Treasure Trove
MSI RX600 $399

MSI www.msicomputer.com.au (02) 9748 0070



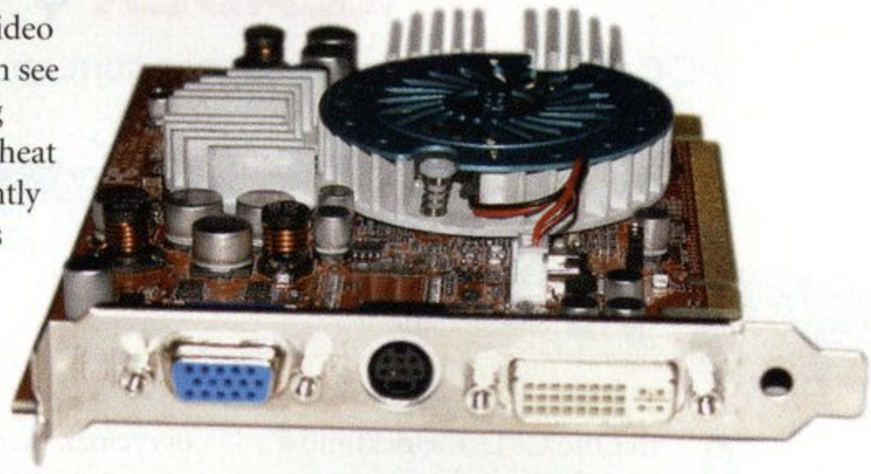
The most expensive of the cards reviewed this is because MSI have opted to include a massive software bundle. Photo Album software, media centres DVD creators and a plethora of other utilities. From a gaming perspective though things are both good and bad. The good are copies of *Prince of Persia 2: The Sands of Time* and *XIII*, two games that make excellent use of the card's abilities without over taxing them. The bad is a copy of *URU: Myst Online* that will be closing down soon.

In regard to performance the metal alloy heat sink that MSI employs is better than the Sapphire offering but with no heat sinks on memory, it can't compete with Abit's card. But in regard to overclocking MSI offer a utility that runs under Windows which will analyse the usage of the card and dynamically overclock to its maximum threshold when needed. The beauty here is the simplicity in which it can be employed and is an ideal way for less experienced users to get the most out of their video card.

PC GAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 69%
VALUE 79%
67%
›The card with the best bundle

Solid construction
ABIT RX600 $300

Altech www.altech.com.au (02) 9735 5655



One look at this video card and you can see the overclocking potential. A solid metal heat sink fan is mounted tightly to the GPU with a series of connected metal fins that extend out and sit on the memory chips to further cooling. Actually the heat sink is more masterful than that, due to the fact that it's a solid piece of metal cast from a die, the heat sink expertly dissipates heat away from memory and GPU across the same large surface area. For this reason the Abit card could be overclocked from 15-20% and offered the best performance with outstanding stability.

It is however a shame that the added extras stop there because there isn't any bundled software to speak of. Just a CD with the latest drivers and a copy of PowerDVD 5 and the inclusion of some hardware additives goes a little way to allay this. You get a VGA to DVI converter, S-Video and composite cables.

If you're not afraid to overclock but aren't prepared to go as far as changing the heat sink on the GPU than this Abit card is an excellent way to squeeze out every last piece of performance without all the hassle. Use the money you save to buy a great game.

PC GAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 75%
VALUE 89%
70%
›And the PCI E winner is... This card

The ultimate home perv kit

EYE SPY MICRO WIRELESS KIT $449

Anyware www.anyware.com.au

(02) 9879 5788

Eye-Spy, helping geeks play a behind the scenes role in their sister's slumber parties since 2004...

The image on the front of the box depicts children playing, a stranger at the front door and a child sleeping peacefully under the invisible illumination of ultra violet light picked up by the night vision camera. All perfectly legitimate, sound reasons for the use of this kit but somehow I doubt that the latter examples will constitute its primary use.

This is stated because the full colour day cameras (in which you get two) are prism shaped and measure in at a very tiny 20mm (W) x 30mm (D) x 30mm (H). In this regard mounting is certainly easy and the colour cameras are light enough to be stuck to a surface with a piece of blu-tac for, ummm, stealthy locations. The unit however must be powered via a transformer which requires access to a power point which could reveal the units location.

The night vision camera also needs DC power but it's considerably larger and has a metal mounting bracket for easier wall mounting. It works by bathing the room in UV light via a series of LEDs which the UV sensitive lens is able to see. Voila, you can now see and record in the dark.

Once the cameras are installed the final piece in the puzzle is the receiver. The unit features a singular antenna and can receive sound and vision from all the cameras wirelessly and assign each input to a channel. Actually a PC isn't even required because you can plug the unit straight into a VCR though a capture card is obviously preferable. But remember invading people's privacy is not cool despite continuous themes out of Hollywood that say otherwise.

Now please excuse me while I go see if my wife has any friends that want to stay over…

PC GAMES ADDICT

INSTALLATION INVOLVED

› Let your conscience be your guide

67%

Memory blur

THERMALTAKE TRUELIGHT MEMORY HEAT SPREADER $32

PC Casegear www.pccasegear.com.au (03) 9584 7266

After the CPU, the next most beneficial performance increase that can be gained comes from faster memory, yet this is often overlooked, especially by mid-level overclockers. Simplistic in function, heat spreaders use metal plates to move heat away from the memory chips. Note that good airflow is needed through the PC in order for the heat to be dissipated from the spreader.

Installation is a matter of clipping the heat spreader over a memory module with the pleasant result of being able to overclock memory higher. That's providing your motherboard has the ability to overclock memory, something you might want to check first.

For the ultimate modded touch a switch can be mounted to a spare PCI slot and connected to the ram sink illuminating it in a blue glow and when the switch is pressed it cycles through different flash modes. The downside though is that for every memory module cooled down, and lit up, another ugly wire has to travel across your case.

PC GAMES ADDICT

INSTALLATION MODERATE

› Another part of your PC to make flash

89%

Still not good enough

EVERGLIDE FUZE $29

PC Casegear www.pccasegear.com.au (03) 9584 7266

Despite Everglide's claims that their mouse pads are the best in the world the reality is that some gamers love them while others are less impressed. Catering to this already established fan base, Everglide has made further refinements to their mouse pad.

Firstly the Fuze is a lot smaller than the aptly named Giganta. Now only slightly larger than a standard mouse pad, the Fuze will fit comfortably on a crowded desk. Another improvement is the addition of a rubber back to secure the pad but it's the surface that has been mostly changed. Perspex has been forsaken for hardened plastic that features a rough textured surface to help grip the mouse.

Herein lies the problem though. The tactile feedback of the surface is great for small movements like when sniping but fast circle strafes still feel restrictive. If you're already a fan of the Everglide pads than the Fuze is a definite upgrade over the previous series otherwise the Func 1030 with its interchangeable smooth / rough surface is still the best.

PC GAMES ADDICT

INSTALLATION SIMPLE

› An improved version of the Giganta

73%

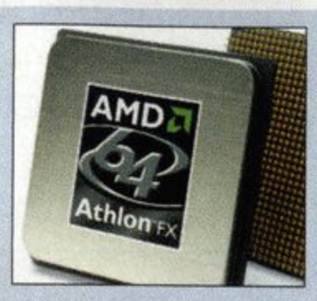
BIG GEAR HUNT

Your definitive guide to the best hardware money can buy

PROCESSOR

BEST IN CLASS

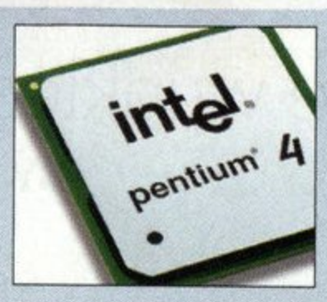
ATHLON FX-53
$1429 AMD
www.i-tech.com.au
1 800 833 883



"Able to compute an astonishing 64 bits in one pass the FX-53 is ready for the next generation of operating systems and games"

MID RANGE

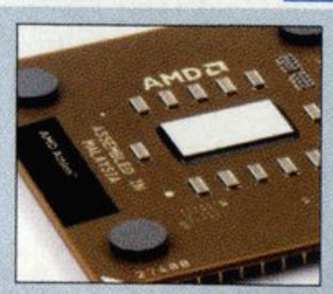
PENTIUM 4EE
$1479 Intel
www.i-tech.com.au
1 800 833 883



"The extreme edition of Intel's Pentium 4 processor is fast, and in the right hands highly overclockable."

BUDGET CHOICE

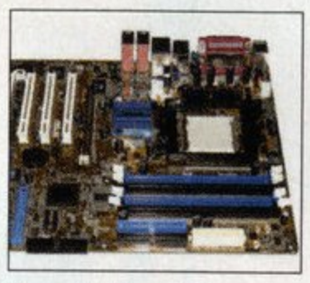
ATHLON XP 3200
$340
www.compuparts.com.au
(02) 9482 2582



"The XP range of processors are quite swift but will forever remain budget with its reliance on a 400MHZ FSB."

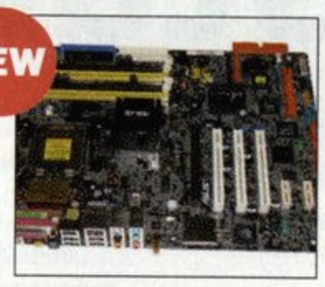
MOTHER BOARDS

A8V DELUXE
$223 Asus
www.asus.com.au
(02) 9683 3488



"Dual Channel DDR, 1000Mbps LAN and 802.11g Wi-Fi, Full RAID, 8x AGP and a 2GHZ FSB. The perfect home for an FX-53"

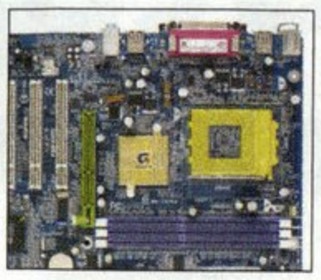
P5AD2 PREMIUM WIRELESS
NEW
$370 Asus
www.synnex.com.au
1300 880 038



"The most comprehensive of the new PCI Express motherboards with three RAID controllers for 12 drives and 802.11g Wi-Fi."

PCGA 25 93%

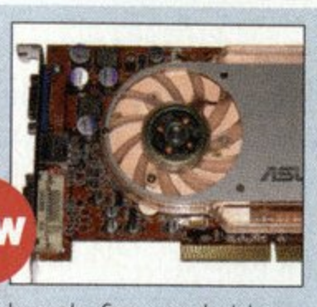
GA-7S748
$70 Gigabyte
www.compuparts.com.au
(02) 9482 2582



"Don't expect any on board additions but with a 400MHz front side bus, this board can power an XP3200+ for such a tiny price."

GRAPHICS CARDS

RADEON AX800XT
$899 Asus
www.synnex.com.au
1300 880 038
NEW



"An uber-fast card that's hassle free and able to handle the next generation of games without a hiccough."

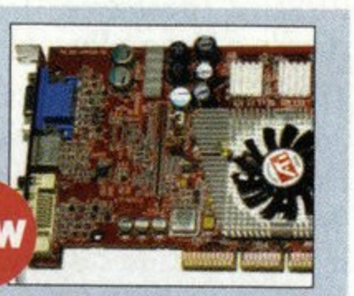
PCGA 25 94%

GEFORCE 6800 ULTRA
$899 MSI
www.msicomputer.com.au
(02) 9748 0070
NEW

"In terms of quality and performance the 6800 is on par with the AX800XT but requires two PCI slots."

PCGA 24 90%

RADEON 9800 PRO
$385 ATi
www.ati.com
(02) 8748 6755
NEW

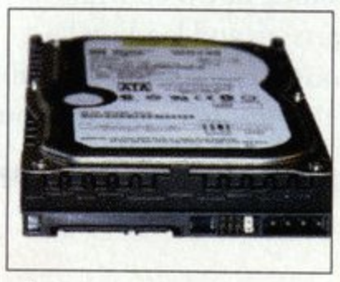


"With the advent of *Half-Life 2* and *Doom 3* you don't want a card any more budget than this."

PCGA 14 94%

HARD DRIVES

RAPTOR WD740
$449 Achieva
www.achieva.com.au
(02) 9742 3288



"Although only 74GB in size, these 10,000 RPM wonders give top performance, especially in a SATA RAID setup. Pure speed."

PCGA 20 97%

MAXTOR MAXLINE III
$420 Maxtor
www.maxtor.com
(02) 9368 3662

"The new king of SATA quarter terabyte drives. Only 7200 RPM this baby can burst at 79.8MB/sec."

PCGA 25 95%

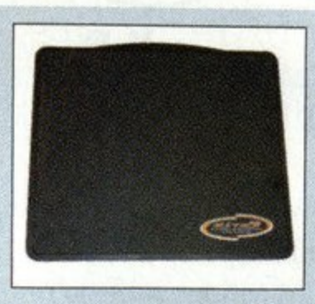
SEAGATE ST3200822A
$209 I-Tech
www.i-tech.com.au
1 800 833 883

"200GB is nothing to be sneezed at and the PATA (old IDE) interface means it will work on anyone's system."

PCGA 23 84%

MOUSE PADS

FUNC 1030 MOUSING SURFACE
$59 PC Casegear
www.pccasegear.com.au
(03) 9584 7266



"Simply the best. One side is silky smooth for fast movements - flip it over and a grippy surface makes you a super sniper."

PCGA 18 94%

STEELPAD
$79 PC Casegear
www.pccasegear.com.au
(03) 9584 7266

"Awesome control, precise movement and a great feel, but it won't work with the Logitech MX series of mice."

PCGA 22 83%

EVERGLIDE FUZE
$29 Everglide
www.everglide.com
(03) 9584 7266

"Sturdier than the ubiquitous foam/material offering, the Fuze is the right price."

PCGA 25 73%

WANT THAT

EYE SPY HOME MICRO WIRELESS KIT
$449 Anyware
www.anyware.com.au
(02) 9879 5788

"Including 3 wireless cameras, 2 colour, one night vision, this kit could be every man's dream and every visitor's nightmare."

PCGA 25 78%

INSERT COIN(S)

Prices vary wildly in the real world. To get the best price on computer kit by contacting three different retailers and comparing costs.

- **Compuparts**
  02 9482 2582
  www.compuparts.com.au
- **Emagen Computuers**
  1300 880 070
  www.emagen.com.au
- **EYO**
  02 9790 8822
  www.eyo.com.au
- **Gamedude**
  07 3387 1500
  www.gamedude.com.au
- **Grays Online Australia**
  Phone N/A
  www.graysonline.com.au
- **Harris Technology**
  1300 139 999
  www.ht.com.au
- **I-Tech Australia**
  1800 833 883
  www.i-tech.com.au
- **Razor Prices**
  www.razorprices.com
- **Techbuy Australia**
  02 9648 1818
  www.techbuy.com.au

KEEP YOUR PC UP TO SPEED

Iron-out the wrinkles in your gaming machine

BY JON HICKS

DO IT... NOW!

Stop restarts!

INVESTIGATE

PROBLEM Your PC reboots at random
REMEDY Check for viruses, disable automatic reboot, and consult technical resources
RESULT Crash-free running. Hopefully.

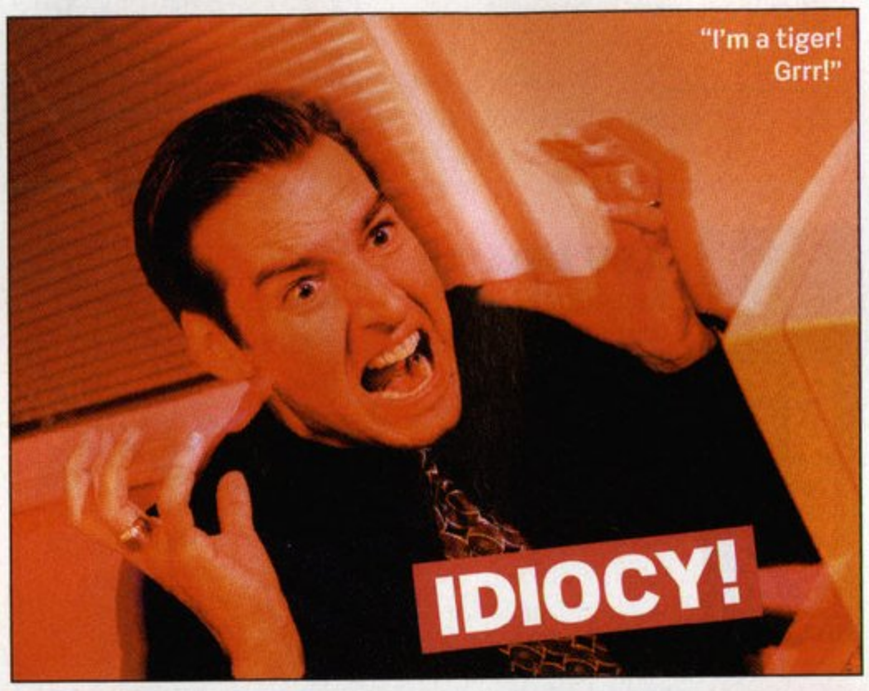
There's nothing quite like an unplanned and spontaneous reboot to get the expletives flowing. Happily, fixing the majority of causes is easy.

If you get a garbled Windows alert first, you've probably got a virus – check the symptoms with the latest alerts at **www.symantec.com**, and hit it with AVG from our disc. If you aren't being given enough time to do this, you can kill the shutdown process by going to Start > Run, typing cmd and clicking OK. Type shutdown.exe -a into the box that appears, and press Enter. Wonder where that virus came from?

The infuriatingly old-school Blue Screen of Death, by contrast, is actually pretty handy, as it gives a few hints about what the problem is. Admittedly, these may be something along the lines of "I'm taking all your data with me and there's nothing you can do about it. Ha!" but there are some clues among the wreckage. That's assuming you get to see it, of course – with Windows 2000 and XP, Microsoft took the fascinatingly idiotic step of automatically setting your PC to reboot every time it started having problems. Kill this by right-clicking on My Computer, choosing Properties > Advanced > Startup and Recovery > Settings and unchecking 'Automatically Restart'.

ON THE DISCS Upgrade your games machine with our essential selection of utilities and apps > Toolkit

Once you've got your error message on display, there's a good chance you can identify it by feeding it into the Search box at **http://support.microsoft.com** – search for KB242450 if you need advice on refining your search.



There's another helpful resource at **http://aumha.org/win5/kbestop.htm**. With luck, this will give you an idea of what's gone wrong and how to fix it.

If your system has drifted so far up effluent estuary that it's just rebooting endlessly, things are trickier. Try holding down F8 while it starts up and loading Last Known Good Configuration. If that doesn't work (or you're using Windows 9.x) try Safe Mode to get to Windows and start repairing things. If you can't even get that far, boot from your Windows XP CD, press R to load the Recovery Console, and type chkdsk /r to fix them. If that turns up nothing, try restoring the registry – see **http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;en-us;Q314466** for Microsoft's best advice on how to do that.

UTILITY OF THE MONTH

THE ALL-SEEING EYE

Every online game may already have a browser to tell you what servers are available, but crucially, they're all rubbish. ASE, by contrast, is super-quick, extremely effective, and shuns the cack-handed bloat of it's rivals. It's loaded with features, too. As well as offering every conceivable detail about the hundreds of available servers it can find, there's a buddy list function too. It'll even sound the alarm if there are any patches for your games and mods. Find a trial version on the disc.
www.udpsoft.com/eye

DO IT... THIS WEEKEND!

Configure the Windows firewall

SECURITY

PROBLEM Firewalls impact online gaming
REMEDY Enable and configure the firewall in Windows XP
RESULT Safer browsing

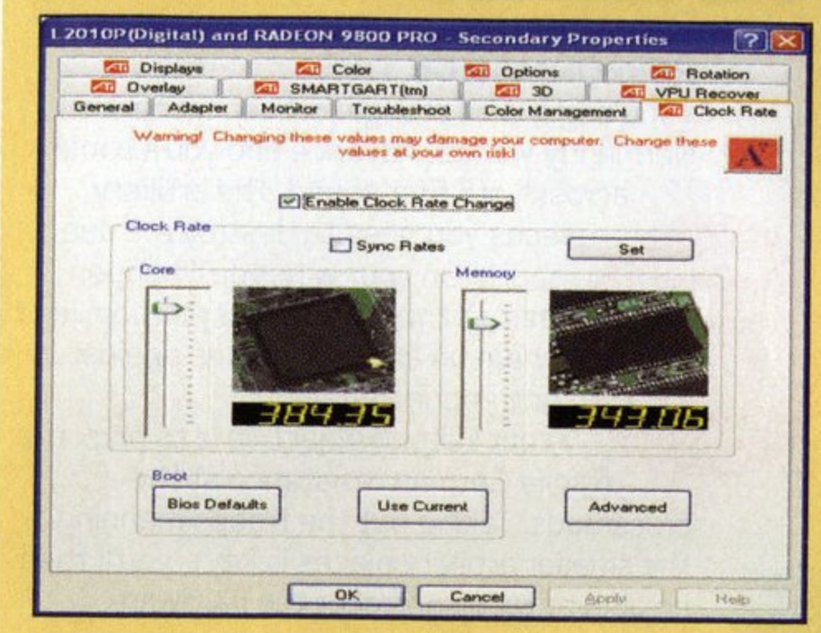
On the global scale of security precautions, the firewall included with Windows XP ranks only slightly higher than an attack gerbil, or a sign that reads 'Go Away'. However, it's a sight more useful than opening all your network ports and waiting for every virus on the internet to come gambolling through the hole, and does protect against worm attacks like Blaster and Sasser. It's easy to enable, too: either double click the network icon in your System Tray, or go to Start > Control Panel > Network Connections and double click on the correct icon. Click the Advanced tab and check the box to enable the firewall.

This will offer basic protection against online exploits and shouldn't cause any problems with joining online games. However, it will start acting up if you're hosting a game. To open the correct ports, click the Settings button at the bottom of the same tab, and click Add. Give it an appropriate name, set the IP to your own – that is, 127.0.0.1 – and specify number and type of the ports you need to open. These will vary depending on the game and you'll probably have to delve into the manual, ReadMe or official website to find them – they should be listed under Network Compatibility.

For more comprehensive security, it's best to install a better-equipped, (yet free) firewall like ZoneAlarm or Sygate Personal Firewall, which you can find on the coverdisc. These will need to be configured in a similar fashion – and remember to do it before you start playing, as with some games and firewalls it's possible for a warning pop-up to crash your PC. Indeed, it's very tempting just to give up.

Essential Tech Tips

TECH SUBJECT
Overclocking 3D cards



They say in life that "you can't get something for nothing" which might explain the popularity of overclocking, because in the world of computers, you can. Overclocking is however a process where you push your video card, a rather expensive part of your PC, past the manufacturer's safety limits. So read this guide thoroughly and take care when tinkering with your machine.

1 Start by deciding upon a common application to run in order to test each overclock. A good choice would be the popular *3D Mark 03* however running the most recent tech demo for your video card can often push it hard enough to bring out any flaws from an overclock that's too high.

2 Far greater performance increases will occur from overclocking memory so start there but don't go instantly for the maximum value. Instead increase the memory's clock speed by 5 - 10 MHz and then run your test application. If you have clocked your card too high the 3D app will crash to desktop otherwise keep raising the value in small increments until you see artefacts on the screen.

3 Artefacts will appear as either quick flashing white dots or a momentary flash of a giant triangle. These "glitches" are being caused by tiny errors and are a prime indicator that your video card is at an unsafe level. If this occurs scale the clock speed back and keep re-running your test application until the image is perfectly 100% stable.

4 Repeat the same process for the video card's core. Remember to keep increasing the speed gradually and to constantly check for artefacts.

5 Be cautious and vigilant. Once you have found the sweet spot of maximised voltage without any artefacts, write it down on a piece of paper. The overclock tabs of the two major video cards, ATI and nVIDIA, allow for the card to be booted in its overclocked state. This is simply not a good idea yet and instead it's better to manually enter your established overclock settings with each windows boot for a week and constantly observe the results. Only once you're positive that the overclock is stable should the video card be booted into an overclocked state.

IMPORTANT NOTE! Even though the above advice generally works without a hitch, it's essential to remember that overclocking invalidates the manufacturer's warranty and can fatally damage components. For a perfectly safe option, high end video card manufacturers such as Asus and MSI have software that automatically overclocks the video card dynamically based on system performance and won't void your warranty.

There, we've warned you now so don't go calling our lawyers if your PC explodes into flames.

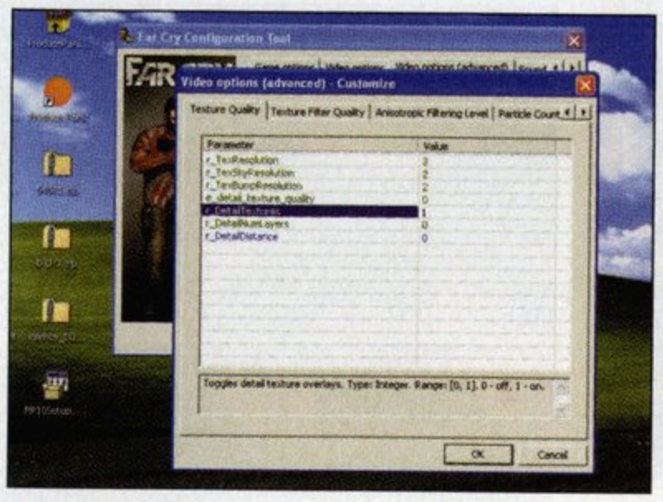
DO IT... THIS MONTH!

FAR CRIKEY

Tweak Far Cry

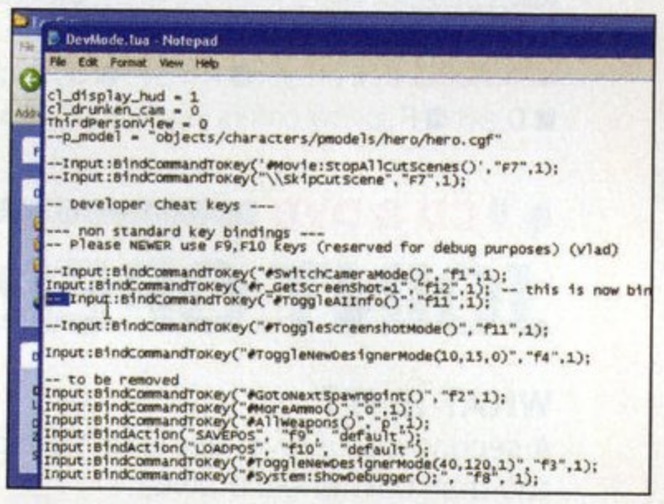
PROBLEM *Far Cry* **runs sluggishly**
REMEDY Tweak graphics settings and use Dev mode
RESULT Faster performance, bonus in-game extras

Arguably the first of the next-gen shooters, *Far Cry* has demonstrated just how advanced it is by stamping all over everybody's system specifications and causing all sorts of problems. The bad news is that it's a very, very demanding game and needs a lot of RAM, CPU cycles and graphics performance. Setting up LAN games here in the office has shown that even a low-speed hard drive can really slow it down. If you're suffering very low framerates, make sure that you don't have *anything* running in the background unless absolutely necessary. Then defragment your hard drive after installation, and knock out the antialiasing and anisotropic filtering completely. It really is a case of clawing back every precious system resource you can muster. Looks like Ubisoft anticipated the problems though, because *Far Cry* includes a dedicated utility that helps improve system performance. Find it under Start > Ubisoft > Far Cry, or in the Bin32 folder in the program directory.



1 Click Video Options (Advanced) choose Low and hit the Advanced button to inspect the individual options to see what you can turn back up.

2 You can enable the Dev mode by right clicking the shortcut and adding -devmode to the end of the Target box. Use the function keys in-game.

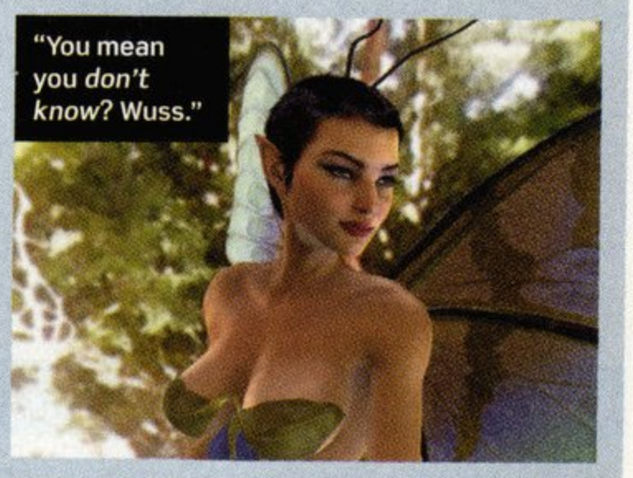


3 Open devmode.lua file in Notepad. Backup first. Remove the — from the start of the ToggleScreenshotMode line and put it in front of ToggleAllInfo for the tourist-like Screenshot Mode.

4 Famously, there's no quicksave function, but you can create your own by opening the console and typing \save_game followed by your name of choice. Load it by typing \load_game <name>.

TOO EMBARRASSED TO ASK...

"HOW DO I UPDATE DRIVERS?"



Both ATi and nVidia release new driver versions monthly to squeeze better performance from their cards. Don't think you're missing out because you've got an old card, either - the same drivers serve every Radeon or GeForce ever made. Trying some new ones is simply a matter of heading to the appropriate website (**www.ati.com** or **www.nvidia.com**). But don't install it straight away - it may conflict with the previous version. Recent versions will have a Display Driver entry in the control panel so you can simply uninstall them; if you've got some older ones that just won't shift take a look at **www.rage3d.com** or **www.driverheaven.com** for advice on removing them. Once cleaned, reboot, press F8 during startup and choose "safe mode". The Found New Hardware Wizard will appear when you arrive in Windows, but don't use it - just launch the install program and it will take care of everything for you. Everything...

ON THE DISCS

Featuring

- **9** top game demos
- **18** great movies
- **21** mods and extras
- **29** must-have tools and utilities
- **4.5Gb of gaming!**

THE PCGA DISC PROMISE

- We pack every disc with the best new PC entertainment every month. If you can't find an item you were expecting, it probably just missed our deadline and you can bet we'll have it on next issue's disc.
- **PCs are inherently unreliable. Sad but true. So if something on your disc doesn't work then we'll help sort it out. See our Troubleshooter guide over the page to see what help we can offer.**
- We scour the earth to bring you the finest playable demos, movies, mods and utilities that PC gaming can provide. But if we miss a trick then tell our Disc Editor all about it. Email dan@derwenthoward.com.au

DVD vs CD

1 DVD **6.12 CDS!**

The world is moving on and CDs can't keep up. Demos, movies and mods are bigger than ever and, inevitably, we can't fit everything on the ancient storage medium.

This issue's DVD beats the CDs by:

+ **4** playable demos
+ **12** movies
+ **12** mods
+ **1** patch
+ **29 items in total**

UPGRADE OPTIONS

- Get a subscription. This reduces the cost of the DVD edition by several dollars each issue.
- **Get a DVD drive. There's one for only $70 in our Big Gear Hunt buyer's guide.**
- Miss out.

CD & DVD

CODENAME: PANZERS

WHAT IS IT?

An infantry-centric mission from the armour-obsessed RTS. Take command of a mixed group of paratroopers as they cause havoc behind enemy lines. Direct their movements, co-ordinate their fire. Their lives are in your hands.

DEMO GOALS

Silence the artillery guns off the coast before moving forward and capturing a vital crossroads.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Nurse your five squads through the entire Utah campaign.

Troops, rather than tanks, are the key here.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

- You begin with a single officer, alone in the Normandy woods. Advance and you'll come across your first squad. The artillery pieces you need to destroy are due south. On your way, you'll happen across the rest of your platoon, lead them on an uphill charge against an entrenched enemy.
- Your second objective is to prick the fragile German resistance at the crossroads. Taking out the troops manning the smaller artillery pieces is key – you'll then be able to take control of the hardware, directing their fire.
- Once you've captured the town, prepare your defences. The landings on Utah beach have begun, and the Germans are desperate to re-supply the Atlantic Wall. The crossroads you've captured is vital – set up road-blocks.
- Keep your officer safe at all times.

README

Developer Storm Region
Publisher CDV
Size 233MB
Requires PIII 750MHz, 256MB RAM, 32Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **E** attack ■ **R** move ■ **S** vehicles: reverse/backward move ■ **S** soldiers: grenades, infl. boat, etc. ■ **D** exit ■ **F** special orders (eg attach/detach) ■ **C** stand ground ■ **V** passive ■ **Q** stand ■ **A** crouch

CD & DVD

JOINT OPERATIONS

WHAT IS IT?

A second multiplayer demo of Novalogic's 100-man battlefield brawler.

DEMO GOALS

Choose sides from Joint Ops or Rebels then battle for bases on the Dormant Volcano island map in the Advance and Capture game mode.

DEMO CHALLENGE
As rifleman, try to get through a game with just ten deaths.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

- Consider your machine spec and internet connection before logging on. 100-man battles may look tempting but keep numbers down if you're struggling for spec.
- Keep an eye on your HUD, it can tell you which bases are under attack and which you're close to capturing. Timing your appearance on the battlefield is crucial.
- Don't stand around too long waiting for vehicles to spawn. You can cover ground on foot pretty quickly if you holster your heavy weapons.
- If you do grab a vehicle be sure to look around for team-mates on foot and shout out for those in need of a lift using Team chat.
- Use the artillery trucks and armouries to change your character type. Simply hit the shift key and choose your new loadout.
- If you're killed in action don't respawn right away. Can call for a medic by hitting the 9 key, alerting medics nearby who could revive you.

A rumble in the jungle - flame-grilled.

README

Developer Novalogic
Publisher In-house
Size 250MB
Requires PIII 750 CPU, 128Mb RAM, 64MB RAM 3D card, internet

CONTROLS **W,A,S,D** Movement ■ **Z** Prone ■ **C** Stand ■ **X** Crouch ■ **B** Binoculars ■ **Shift** Use ■ **CTRL1-9** Change seats ■ **F** special weapon ■ **B** Binoculars ■ **T** talk ■ **Y** team talk ■ **F6** change HUD

CD & DVD

PAINKILLER - MULTIPLAYER

WHAT IS IT?

The more sociable way to play the over the top gothic horror FPS surprise package of late, Painkiller. Fast paced, with an unusual array of weaponry to wield, Painkiller makes for a action packed, if at times ludicrous multiplayer fix.

DEMO GOALS

With only two maps and two modes, it shouldn't take long to get used to how Painkiller plays when someone else is shooting back at you with the same sort of weaponry for a change. Because every weapon is dangerous in some situation, it's vital you keep moving so as not to be an easy target.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Win a deathmatch round using only the Painkiller

Some serious strategy is needed here.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

› Keep running and jumping to make yourself a harder target as well as get you where you're going quicker. If you can throw in some sideways jumps for variety you'll be tricky to hit.

› While all the weapons are deadly when used correctly, the rocket launcher / chaingun is the weapon you want. Capable of dealing immense damage with rockets, as well as long distance instant deliver damage from the remarkably accurate chaingun.

› Try learning how to time a route around both maps so that the armour reappears just as you arrive to it every time.

README

Developer People Can Fly
Publisher Dreamcatcher
Size 136MB
Requires P4 1.5GHz CPU, 128Mb RAM, 64Mb RAM 3D card.

CONTROLS **W,A,S,D** Movement ■ **Left mouse** Fire primary ■ **Right mouse** Fire secondary ■ **1-9** Change weapons ■ **T** talk ■ **Y** team talk

CD & DVD

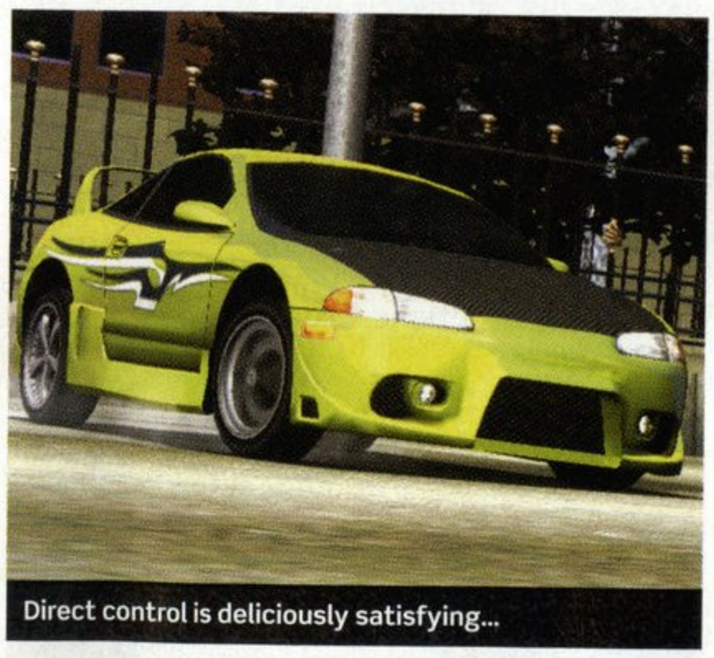
JUICED

WHAT IS IT?

Acclaim's upcoming arcade racer that appears to have a feature laden final build, but this demo offers but a morsel of the full serve. Just one track in San Francisco, but there are three cars to drive, and the time of day and weather can be toyed with.

DEMO GOALS

Unsurprisingly, the only aim here is to place as best you can in a one off race.



Direct control is deliciously satisfying...

PERFORMANCE TIPS

› Don't let the arcadey looks fool you, *Juiced* still requires you to either brake early or quit accelerating on a lot of the 90 degree turns. Handbraking is always an option of course, but usually slows you down.

› You won't want to make a habit of this due to car damage but the sides of the roads act like bumpers if hit at a gentle enough angle. Don't worry about the fans behind those flimsy looking barriers... They're fine.

› Try racing in varying conditions, particularly with regard to rain. If you're having problems in corners, try braking early before you turn and accelerating gently as you steer through it.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Place first racing using manual gears in the wet.

› You'll want an analogue controller for the final release. Being able to ease off on the accelerator or brake gently will make keeping control in *Juiced* infinitely easier than with the keyboard.

README

Developer Acclaim
Publisher Acclaim
Size 134MB
Requires 933MHz CPU, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card w/T&L ▶

CONTROLS **Up arrow** throttle ■ **Down arrow** brake ■ **Left & Right arrows** steering ■ **Right shift** nitro ■ **V** View change ■ **B** handbrake ■ **M** glance right ■ **N** glance left ■ **+** gear up ■ **-** gear down

DISC EXTRAS

More than just demos...

+16 mods

Essential updates of *Battlefield 1918*, first Fusion upgrade for *Call of Duty*, a horde of *UT2004* mods and more.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004: Mods aplenty!

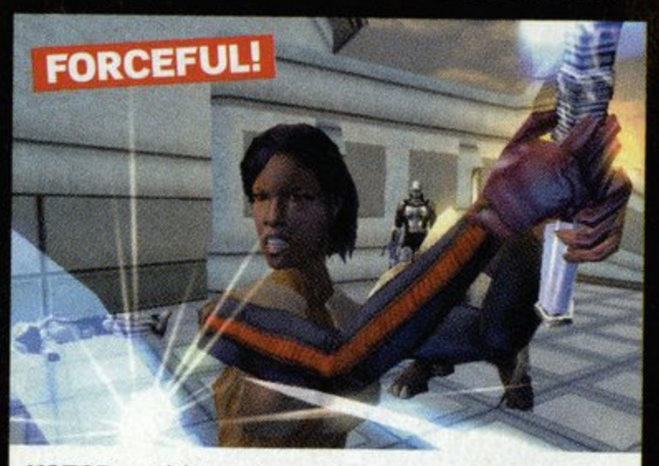
+19 movies

All new trailer treats from *Rome Total War, Warhammer 40K Dawn of War, Battle for Middle-Earth* and more major releases.

ROME TOTAL WAR: Slaying the Barbarians

+11 galleries

Screenshots of *Knights of the Old Republic 2* and *Rollercoaster Tycoon 3* plus a glimpse of *Unreal 3.0, Close Combat* and loads more...



KOTOR 2: Sith Lords and fierce knights

+Patches

› Cracking new game clunking like an electronic wreck? We have fixes for:
Ground Control II - Update One
Join Operations v1.2.0.7
Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow 1.3
Warcraft III: The Frozen Throne v1.16
Warlords Battlecry III v1.02

+Bonus features

› Want to fashion your own Call of Duty maps? We've included the map compiler, as well as Doujin Freeware and shareware goodies to boot.

Find it in: Toolkit, DIY & Extras

See the back of your box for full disc contents.

Disc page contents refer to DVD edition. CD contents restricted by size.

NEW!

THE TOOLKIT

32 top notch tools and handy applications

Game apps

Match-making ..... X-Fire
Server browser ..... All-Seeing Eye
Voice communicator ..... Skype
Chat software ..... Trillian
Screen grabber ..... IrfanView
Emulation ..... Dosbox, ScummVM
Demo viewer ..... Seismovision
Video capture ..... FRAPS

Performance

Download manager ..... BitTorrent
Uninstaller ..... EasyUninstall 6
Video card driver ..... Radeon, nVidia

Security

Virus checker ..... AVG
Anti-spam ..... Spybot Search & Destroy
Anti-spyware ..... AdAware
Anti-popup ..... Coolweb Shredder
Firewall ..... Zone Alarm

Media Management

File compressor ..... WinRar
Picture viewer ..... IrfanView
PDF viewer ..... Acrobat Reader
Web browser ..... Mozilla Firefox
FTP client ..... Smart FTP
Email client ..... Mozilla Thunderbird
Music player ..... WinAmp
Movie player ..... Media Player Classic
Movie codec ..... DivX
Word processing etc ..... Open Office

TROUBLE SHOOTER

Is your coverdisc playing up? Help is at hand

1 If the menu program doesn't start automatically, the autorun feature may be disabled on your PC. Go to the START/RUN command on the task-bar and type D:\IERUNNER.EXE (where D is the drive letter).

2 For problems with an individual demo or application, refer to the Help section on the disc. Also ensure your drivers and DirectX version are up-to-date.

3 If your disc is defective then return it to the address below, along with a description of the fault and an SAE:
Disc Department, PC Games Addict, Reply Paid 1035, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355

4 As soon as we discover issues with programs on the disc, we will post solutions on the **PC Games Addict** website. Check here to see if there's a quick fix:
http://www.pcga.com.au/

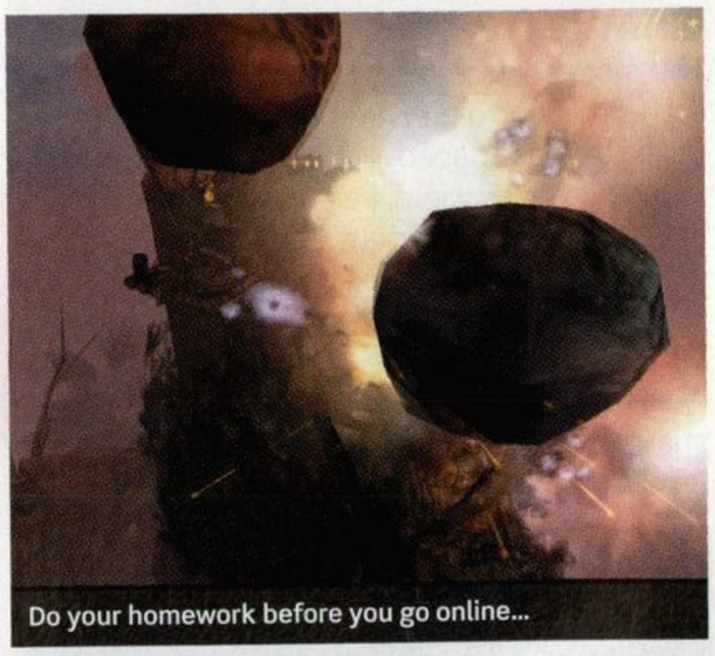
We can only provide assistance with technical problems *directly* related to our coverdiscs. The PCGA discs have been thoroughly tested and certified 'virus free' by an independent organisation. We recommend that you always run a up-to-date virus checker on ANY software before running it. Derwent Howard Pty Ltd cannot accept any responsibility for disruption, damage and/or loss to your data or your computer system which may occur while using these discs, the programs or the data on them. Ensure that you have backups of data contained on your hard drives before running *any* new software.

DVD

AIR BUCCANEERS

WHAT IS IT?

A full *UT2004* Total Conversion that turns Epic's shooter into a bizarre steam-punk air balloon duck shoot. The mod features seven brand new maps, a new game mode and a full tutorial. Work through this before taking to the air. Once you've mastered the basics venture online, and get into a four man team. You can fly solo but carrying out each of the four jobs aboard a balloon is mighty tricky.


Do your homework before you go online...

PERFORMANCE TIPS

› Use the boosts wisely. Tapping the forward key (W) four times gives you altitude gain while tapping it twice followed by the back button (S) will propel you forwards.
› You must have empty hands to pilot the balloon. Scroll through your items until you have no weapon selected.
› Use your radar in battle –. it can identify enemies and give you a path back to base.
› If you're a two-man crew make sure the gunner also looks after attacking with personal weapons.
› You can add airmines to the cannons for deadly long-range missiles.
› The cannon can't fire forwards so if you're the pilot make sure you manoeuvre the balloon side on to your opponent.
› If you can get close enough to your opponent your attacker may be able to whip out his sword and cut through your enemy's ropes which should introduce him to the ground rather quickly.

MOD CHALLENGE
Dare you command a balloon in combat, alone?

README

Developer Ludocraft
Publisher In-house
Requires Full

CONTROLS **W,A,S,D** navigate balloon ■ **Mouse wheel** scroll weapons ■ **4x Left or Right** strafe ■ **F1** team/player status ■ **Backspace** throw weapon

DVD

PERIMETER MULTIPLAYER

WHAT IS IT?

A chance to sample the fine paper/scissors/eyeball-on-stick strategy game from Mother Russia. This is a multiplayer demo, so it includes online and LAN play, but don't worry – there's a single player tutorial and AI options. Excellent.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Defeat four AI players in less than half an hour.

DEMO GOALS

On the 'Fish' map, achieve complete dominance over your enemies. Crush them underfoot, under-track, under-wheel, under-anti-gravity lift devices. Crush them dead.

Training troops is trickier than in your average RTS

PERFORMANCE TIPS

› Before you begin, land your frame. That doubles your power output, and therefore, your building capacity.
› Your single resource in Perimeter is energy. It's siphoned off the land you control – by placing energy taps.
› You can only place energy taps and buildings on flattened land. Use the terraforming tools to create car-parks and impenetrable barriers.
› You can initially only produce soldiers, officers and technicians. Use these building blocks to produce more effective forces.
› You can't order individual units around: instead, you control them in groups. To create a second group, you must build a Command Centre.
› You can raise an impenetrable energy shield by pressing the Enter key. This is an enormous drain on your resources, so use it wisely.

README

Developer KD-Labs
Publisher Codemasters **Requires** PIII 1GHz, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **Z** build ten soldiers ■ **X** build ten officers ■ **C** build ten technicians ■ **Enter** raise shield ■ **F1-F5:** select squad one two five. ■ **+/-** Zoom in/Zoom out ■ **Middle Mouse Button** Rotate Camera

DVD

NEOTOKYO

That cod piece is quite a statement.

WHAT IS IT?
The first release of the Manga-inspired class-based *UT2004* mod. Take sides.

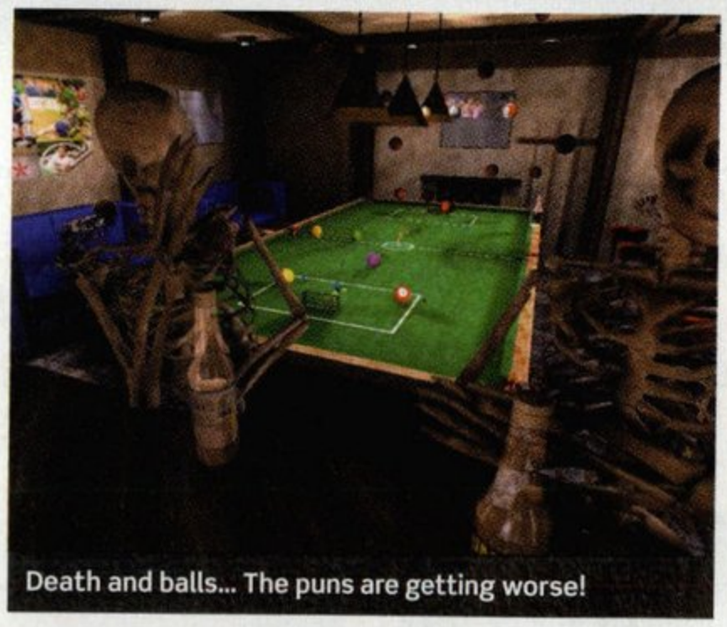
PERFORMANCE TIPS
› Before you enter a battle, you'll need to choose a team, a class, and a load-out. Beginners are best off playing as a male heavy weapon specialist – they begin with the most armour and a good selection of firearms and explosives.
› To win a match, you need to wrestle control points from your enemy. They're marked on your HUD as CP: waddle over towards them, stand in the glowing circle, and they'll gradually turn over to your colour.
› The enemy isn't going to simply stand by and watch you win. Talk your team-mates into setting up defensive perimeters and posting lookouts – you'll soon achieve dominance.
› When you're familiar with the heavy weapons class, take a moment to try the Scout class. They're far nippier, and, although they don't carry particularly effective firearms, they do come equipped with rechargeable thermo-optic camouflage. This means you can turn invisible for short periods of time: useful, of course, if you're infiltrating an enemy CP, or simply running from a fight. Wimp.
› Talk to your team-mates. We really can't recommend this enough. When lead and lasers-fire is being exchanged, you'll genuinely need someone to watch your back.
› The mod should be installed in your *UT2004* directory. When it's ready, you must also apply the latest balance patch, also found on our disc. Start *UT2004* as normal, and select NeoTokyo from the User Mods bar, found within the Community menu.

README
Developer NeoTokyo team
Publisher N/A
Requires *UT2004* and latest patch (on the DVD)

CONTROLS **The Neotokyo installer doesn't include defaults for the game's special functions. Before you enter a match you should define buttons for reloading and using thermo-optic camouflage.**

DVD

DEATHBALL 2


Death and balls... The puns are getting worse!

WHAT IS IT?
A brutal bloodsport based *UT2004* mod, this is a great alternative to Bombing Run. Real world games and sports have been used as a focus for the arenas, with everything from this billards table to the right through to ice hockey rinks and more

PERFORMANCE TIPS
› At risk of continuing to sound obsessed with football, if you want to become a great Deathball 2.0 player, we advise you take a look at basic football tactics. Having crack gun skills always helps, but being an open man who passes and works towards getting goals is much more useful to your team.
› Master the art of curling in a cross, after touch can be used to ensure you can bend a pass around an opponent that would otherwise have you covered.
› Understand the abilities of every player. Goalkeepers are immune to being knocked about by explosive damage, so don't waste time trying to hammer him into submission so your team mate can get off a shot. It simpl won't work.
› Finding the game a bit crowded or sparse? We've found five a side works best
› When you're defending in you own penalty zone, know that you can kill an opponent in one hit as oppsed to two.
› Obvious to some, but in case you didn't notice, holding down fire longer produces a faster/harder shot or pass
› Still stumped on teamplay? Follow these simple rules: Do not bunch up next to a team mate, look to pass ASAP, move into an open spot as soon as you pass. The rest will come.

README
Developer Deathball team
Publisher N/A
Requires *UT2004*, Latest *UT2004* patch (on the DVD)

CONTROLS **The Deathball 2.0 installer doesn't include defaults for the game's special functions. Before you enter a match you should define buttons for all your combat needs.**

MADE IN JAPAN
Top indie freeware from the land of the rising sun...

Warning Forever
› **WHAT'S THE GAME?** A simple top-down shooter with a twist. Literally.
› **WHY WE CHOSE IT** It's another classic example of how the simplest game ideas can prove to be the most addictive and enjoyable.
› **DEMO GOALS** The basic aim of the game is to take down as many boss ships as possible within the time limit. Dying cause a time penalty rather than an instant demise. How far can you make it?

There's no two ways about it - This game is boss...

A PACK MADE IN HEAVEN
For beautifully balanced biffo

› **GAME** *Call of Duty: Fusion Pack*
From the makers of the popular replacement pack for Counter-Strike. New content includes:
› **NEW MAP** St. Petersburg Seaport
› **NEW WEAPON SKINS** Colt 45, M1 M1 Carbine, M1 Garrand, Rocket, BAR, MP40, MG42, FG52, K98, Luger, grenades, KAR98, Thompson
› **PLUS** 2 player skins, new sounds, menu screens, blood effects & gloves!

CALL OF DUTY: FUSION Nice gloves!

BE YE A FORGER OF MAD MAPS?
Do you possess the deft touch of the creator? If so, and you'd like to see it included on our cover disc, email us at pcga@derwenthoward.com.au, with the subject line "MAPS", your map attached *, and details we should know about your creation.

* If attachments turn out to add up to a file size of over 3MB, let us know before sending them on, as there's no gaurantee we will be able to include it. Naturally we'll endeavour to include what we can.

NEXT MONTH'S PC GAMES ADDICT ON SALE SEPT 15

"KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY"

AT HOME WITH THE SIMS 2

All magazine contents and gifts subject to change. Some gifts not available overseas.

REVIEWS
Warhammer 40K: Dawn of War
The Sims 2
Full Spectrum Warrior

PREVIEWS
Worms: Forts
Prince of Persia 2
Brothers in Arms
Men of Valour

DEMOS
The Sims 2
Mashed
Doom 3
Richard Burns Rally

EXTRA-LIFE
UT 2004 map making tips
MMO sex - virtual gangbangers?

WARHAMMER 40K: DAWN OF WAR
All set to go under the PCGA review gavel!

ROME: TOTAL WAR
About to blow the competition away...

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The Industry's Most Awarded Memory

"Best Memory of the Year" - System Cooling
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XL memory

Lower latency = Faster Performance

XL - Best for AMD Athlon64 Systems

Corsair's new XL Xtra-Low Latency memory offers the fastest possible memory timings for optimal performance on AMD Athlon64 systems.

Up to 38% performance increase in some applications!
(determined using PCMark04)

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CMX512-3200XL	PC-3200	512MB	2-2-2-5

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Higher Clock Speed = Faster Performance

XMS2 - Best for Intel 915/925X Systems

Corsair's new XMS2 DDR2 memory offers the highest clock speeds, for optimal performance on compatible Intel systems.

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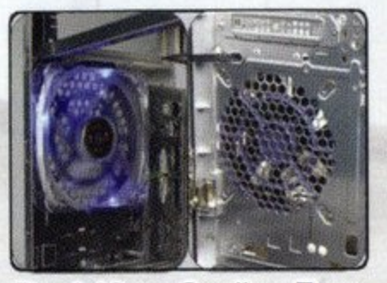
Tsunami Dream

Designer Case by Thermaltake



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400w Power Supply Included

Slide-in Cage

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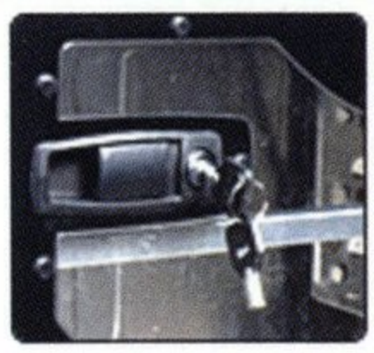

Lockable Side Panels

VA3000SNA

VA3000BNA

P/N	VA3000SWA, VA3000SNA, VA3000BWA, VA3000BNA
Drive Bays	11. External 4 x 5.25", 2 x 3.5". Internal 5 x 3.5"
Net Weight	6kg (13.2lb)
Motherboards	Micro ATX, Standard ATX & Extended ATX (Dual CPU)
Dimension	(H*W*D) 495 x 210x 478 mm
Cooling System (5 Fans)	Front (intake). 120x120x25 mm, 2000rpm, 21dBA. Rear (exhaust). Blue LED fan, 120x120x25 mm, 2000rpm, 21dBA. Side (intake). 90x90x25 mm, 1800rpm, 21dBA
Material	Chassis - 0.8 mm fully aluminium
Features	Mirror coating. Screw less slots for easy assembly. 7x 3.5" slide-in cage. Dual USB 2.0, IEEE 1394. Firewire, Audio & Speaker ports. 400w power supply included

VA3000SWA

VA3000BWA

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